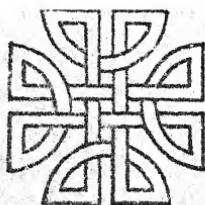


THE LIFE OF SAINT PAUL

BY

F. A. FORBES



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"SAUL, SAUL, WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?"

From a Rāthāl cartoon.



Nihil Obstat.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. " AGAINST THE GOAD "	7
II. " WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME ? "	16
III. " JESUS IS THE CHRIST "	25
IV. BY LAND AND SEA	35
V. THE OLD LAW OR THE NEW ?	47
VI. " COMBATS WITHOUT, FEARS WITHIN "	58
VII. " WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED "	71
VIII. " STRENGTH IN INFIRMITY "	81
IX. " THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS "	91
X. " AN AMBASSADOR IN BONDS "	103
XI. " THE CITY THAT HATH FOUNDATIONS "	116

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

"SAUL, SAUL, WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?"	Frontispiece
<i>From a Raphael cartoon.</i>	
THE CONVERSION OF THE GOVERNOR OF CYPRUS	38
<i>From a Raphael cartoon.</i>	
ST. PAUL PREACHING AT ATHENS	74
<i>From a picture by Laporte, by permission of Messrs. Bonasse Lebel.</i>	
THE SHIPWRECK OFF THE COAST OF MALTA	112
<i>From a picture in the Cathedral Church of Rabata-Notabile at Malta.</i>	

CHAPTER I

" AGAINST THE GOAD "

THEY had him now at last, this insolent follower of the crucified Nazarene, who had dared to preach openly in the synagogue against their Law. This was the result of Gamaliel's advice a short time since, when they had had Peter and John, the very heads of this pernicious sect, within their grip. "If this be the work of man," he had said, "it will destroy itself; if it be of God, you cannot thwart it." And they had taken his counsel, and let them go with a caution "not to preach in this name." They had replied insolently—these Nazarenes were always insolent—"Judge ye if it be better to obey men rather than God," and had gone their way bolder than ever.

They had been wiser when they had crucified the Leader of these men between two thieves. There had been peace for a little while after that.

And now here was this Stephen whom they had caught at last, thanks to the energy and determination of Saul of Tarsus. He had promised to be more troublesome than them all, for he was no ignorant fisherman, no unlettered tax-gatherer, but a man of culture and education, who spoke Greek fluently, and was trained in the heathen learning. All the restless young men in the city had gone after this new teacher whose personal charm was so strong, and whose preaching was so eloquent. Well, there should be no indulgence this time—they would see to that.

Tier upon tier they sat in the great hall of the Sanhedrin, and tier upon tier of scowling faces looked down upon the young deacon who stood as his Master had stood not so long before, alone in the midst of his enemies.

There was no sign of fear in the prisoner. An outsider, brought suddenly into the court, might have concluded from his joyous and noble bearing that the great council of Jewish Doctors had met to confer some honour on the young man who stood before them.

Witness after witness was called—always the same charge, in almost the same words.

He had spoken constantly in the synagogues against the Law and against the Holy Place.

"Are these things so?" asked the judges. It was the usual formula, and meant that the prisoner was at liberty to speak in his own defence. But Stephen was not thinking of his own defence. His time was near at hand; he knew it, and rejoiced. The palm of martyrdom was already within his grasp; but while life remained to him he had a message for the world. Were there any there who had ears to hear it? Amongst that great multitude was there one soul to be won for his Master? The fearless eyes of the young deacon searched the faces round him for a sign that the spirit was alive within. Searching, they rested for a moment on a face that was not to him altogether as the rest, though it belonged, as Stephen well knew, to one of the most bitter of his Lord's persecutors, through whose means he himself had been taken. The eyes of the prisoner and those of Saul of Tarsus met for a moment, and then Stephen spoke, in answer to the witnesses who had declared him a blasphemer of the Law.

"Men and brethren," rang out the clear young voice, "the God of glory appeared to our Father Abraham." Then, launching forth as one inspired into his theme, he set forth in glowing terms the mercy of God towards His chosen people.

This was not altogether what the Doctors of the Law had expected. The scowl of hatred faded gradually from their faces; they sank back in their seats with self-complacent satisfaction, and listened to Stephen's words.

From across the great hall the dark eyes of Saul the Pharisee, watching, saw the face of Stephen, as he himself told St. Luke years later, "as the face of an angel." It was a strange thing, he said to himself, that radiant expression of joy in one who knew that he was facing death. He had seen it before in these Nazarenes. He had seen it even in women and children when he had driven them from their homes, tracking them down like wild beasts, to deliver them to prison and to punishment. Not to death—the Romans had watched too carefully for that—but times were changing. Tiberius was dead; Caligula, his successor, took but little interest in his foreign

provinces; the Roman Governor was absent. An execution or two would certainly be overlooked at such a moment, and strong measures were needed if this sect were to be stamped out once for all as it ought to be.

Stephen spoke on. Little did his hearers see whether the burning words of the young deacon were tending. Little did they notice how, in strong contrast to the glories of the Chosen People and God's mercies towards them, he was setting their rebellious spirit, their hardness of heart, their treatment of the Prophets, their earthly-minded clinging to the letter of the Law whilst they ignored its spirit.

Pausing at last, he looked round at the assembled listeners. A universal expression of placid self-complacency was on every face. They had drunk in greedily all that flattered the pride of their race; the rest had passed unheeded. His words had struck against that wall that had resisted to the last the teaching of his Master—the pharisaical pride that had nailed his Master to the Cross, and mocked at the All-Holy in His agony. And he, Stephen, was about to follow in His footsteps. His heart leapt at the thought. Time was

short, let them hear the truth once for all before he died.

"Ye uncircumcised in heart and ears," the fearless voice rang through the hall like a trumpet note, "always you resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did. Betrayers and murderers of the Just One, you who have received the Law from the hands of angels, and have not kept it."

An electric thrill ran through the assembly. In the space of a moment the stately council of the Sanhedrin had become a mob of howling fanatics. Stephen turned instinctively to the dark face of Saul, who stood erect and silent amidst the general tumult, his lips set with bitter determination, a smouldering fire of anger in his eyes. The young deacon's indignation died away in a passion of pity. Looking upwards, suddenly his face shone with a supernatural beauty, which for a moment held even his raging enemies spell-bound.

"I see the Heavens opened," he said, the awestruck sweetness of his voice falling strangely on the sudden silence, "and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

There were some there who had heard the same words before—not so long before—when a greater than Stephen had stood at their judgment-seat.

The savage tumult broke out again more wildly than ever. There was no question now of further trial or condemnation. With yells of rage they flung themselves upon the prisoner, and dragged him forth from the precincts of the Holy Place to be stoned outside the gates of the city. According to the Law the witnesses should cast the first stones at the criminal. In an execution where all else was unlawful, it was well to be correct on one point. The witnesses therefore cast off their outer garments for greater freedom, and laid them down at the feet of Saul of Tarsus, whose zeal for the Law and whose tireless energy had been of such service to them in this matter.
"And they stoned Stephen."

The young martyr fell stunned and bleeding, but soon struggled to his knees, and raised his hands to Heaven.

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," he prayed, almost in his Master's words.

The mists of death were closing round him.

Once more his eyes, looking on his murderers with a divine forgiveness in their depths, met those of Saul, erect and motionless at his post. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," he cried in ringing accents. They were his last words. Sinking to the earth, Christ's first martyr "fell asleep."

* * * *

"And Saul was consenting to his death."

* * * *

The little band of the faithful, with the Apostles, laid the shattered body of Stephen with love and reverence in its last resting-place; a resting-place offered them, tradition tells us, by that wise and gentle Rabbi Gamaliel, whose influence had prevailed with the Sanhedrin to let the Apostles go free, "lest perhaps," as he had said, "ye be found to be fighting against God." The first martyr blood, which was to be the strength of the Church, had been shed. The influence of the young deacon, who shines out to us for one moment like a radiant vision, was to endure in the words and deeds of others; most of all, perhaps, in the words and deeds of that bitter enemy of Christ, destined later to follow in his footsteps.

* * * *

Why was it that the events of that trial and martyrdom were burnt indelibly into the heart and mind of Saul of Tarsus ? Why was the Christ in the blinding vision near Damascus to remind him that it had been " hard to kick against the goad " ? What had the young martyr seen in the face of Saul behind the anger and hatred that were visible to all ?

" Lest perhaps ye be found to be fighting against God." Was it the anguish of a fearful doubt ?

CHAPTER II

“ WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME ? ”

THE Roman Governor of Judea either ignored or chose to ignore the execution of Stephen. He was no doubt well aware that anyone who meddled with the Jews on a question in which their Law was concerned was very likely to bring a hornets' nest about his ears. Pilate was at the very moment in Rome, whither he had been called to answer for his cruelty in putting down a Jewish rebellion in the provinces. It was safer on the whole to keep clear of these fanatical Israelites, and to let them fight out their differences among themselves.

The chiefs of the Sanhedrin grew bolder. A furious persecution, in which Saul of Tarsus took a leading part, broke out against the infant Church. Scourging, torture, and death were the fate of all who called upon the name of Jesus of Nazareth. The faithful, fleeing

from Jerusalem, took refuge in the neighbouring towns and cities. Wherever they passed they spread the news of the Gospel, and the truth at last began to dawn on the persecutor. His passionate efforts, instead of stamping out the Christians, had as yet only resulted in the increase of their numbers. Even at Damascus, so the rumour reached him, they existed, and were daily making converts. Let them take heed to themselves; they should find that the strong arm of the Sanhedrin could reach them even there.

Going to the High Priest, Saul proposed a plan for hunting down these Nazarenes, who were spreading their blasphemous doctrines all over Judea. Then, armed with letters to the synagogue at Damascus, authorizing him to seize on all the Christians he could find, both men and women, he set forth in state, accompanied by the escort which was due to him as the legate of the High Priest.

Since the death of Stephen, Saul had given himself little time for reflection. But now, riding through the quiet country in the heat of the day and the hush of the evening, the hours were long for thought and remembrance.

He rode fast, and pressed on in haste to his journey's end; but—

“ Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.”

The travellers were drawing near their journey's end. They had crossed the dreary desert land of Iturea, and were riding through the fertile valley in which Damascus, to quote the Syrian proverb, lies “ like a handful of pearls on an emerald carpet.” The river rippled between its flowery banks beneath the palms and the fruit-trees that grew even to the borders of the sun-baked road. The perfume of the scented thickets made the noonday sweet with its fragrance; a breathless silence brooded over all.

Suddenly a blazing light, more brilliant than the eastern sunshine, surrounded the travellers, in the midst of which—visible to the eyes of Saul of Tarsus alone—shone the vision of One fairer than the children of men. Before the glory of that Face Saul fell to the ground as one dead, while above his head there rang a Voice: “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me ?”

“ Who art thou, Lord ?” he asked in

trembling accents. Did he guess the answer before it came?

"I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad."

Ah, Saul knew that it was hard. He had measured his strength against the Crucified, and the Crucified had conquered.

"My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee,
I am defenceless utterly."

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" he asked humbly—he, Saul, who had been so sure of his own judgment.

"Rise up," came the answer, "and go into the city; there it shall be shown thee."

He rose unsteadily to his feet, for the darkness without was as great as the light within. The noonday sunshine, the scented orchards, the glittering river, the faces of his companions, all had vanished; Saul was blind. So had God punished him for having fought against the true light that had come into the world to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of His people Israel.

He groped with outstretched hands for someone to lead him. Such was his entry

into that Damascus to which he had come in pride and pomp as the representative of the Sanhedrin. His companions had seen the light and heard the voice, but the heavenly vision was for Saul alone. Awestruck and silent they guided their chief into the city, along the street called "Strait" to the house of a man named Judas.

Saul's spirit had been stirred to its depths. The very roots of his life seemed to have been torn up in that blinding vision on the Damascus road. One thought stood out amidst the tumult of conflicting emotions: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest!" The words seemed to have burnt themselves into his heart and soul, and in the light of them the events of the last few months arose before him. The radiant face of Stephen as he had seen it in the great hall, his dying look, his dying words, the still figure in its blood-stained raiment. Piteous faces of men and women whom he had tortured to make them blaspheme their Lord shone out in the darkness. Most terrible of all to his suffering spirit, the thought of that Face which he had seen for one blinding moment in Its glory pierced him

like a sword. Tender, loving, reproachful—the terrors of God's vengeance would have been easier to bear.

His soul bowed down to the dust in an anguished prayer for pardon. In the bitterness of his remorse he called upon that Name the very sound of which had been hateful in his ears, called upon it with the despairing cry that never goes unheeded. . . .

Peace fell at last upon his troubled spirit; he saw in a vision one who touched him and gave him back his sight. It was good for him to await in silence the salvation of his God. . . .

"Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision: 'Ananias.' And he answered: 'Behold I am here, Lord.' "

"And the Lord said to him: 'Arise and go into the street which is called Strait, and seek in the house of Judas one named Saul of Tarsus. For behold he prayeth.' "

Ananias was aghast. Well did he know the name of Saul of Tarsus, and on what mission he had come. With childlike simplicity he explained the situation to his

Master. "Go," was the answer; "this man is my chosen instrument. I will show him what great things he must suffer for My Name's sake."

Ananias set forth at once. Entering the house where Saul was, he greeted him as a brother, told him that he was a messenger sent by Christ, and, laying his hands on him, healed him of his blindness.

"Rise up," he said, "and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." And he baptized him in the Name of Jesus.

The rumour of this wonderful thing that had come to pass spread rapidly amongst the disciples in Damascus. They found it hard to believe, but Ananias was there to bear witness to the facts. They hastened to see the man whose very name but a short time since had filled them with fear.

From them Saul learnt the story of the life and death of their Lord, and His glorious Resurrection. There were men there, perhaps, who had seen and spoken with the Master, who could tell of the words and deeds that were treasured for ever in their hearts, for as yet the Gospels were not written.

To Saul it seemed as if a lifetime had been crowded into those few days. He was still stunned by the revelation he had received. Feeling above all things the need for solitude and prayer, he went into the desert of Arabia, there to ask once more what his Lord would have him to do, and to learn the secret of his life's work from the Christ Himself.

We do not know what passed during those days in the desert, but we gather from the words of Saul in after years that he saw face to face "the King in His beauty," and learnt from Him fully all that he had need to know.

It was a new man who came back to Damascus at God's appointed time, a man on fire with the love of Christ and with zeal for His glory. He began to preach in the synagogues with a boldness and eloquence that astonished all who heard him, and that roused the Jews to fury. Rumours had already reached them of Saul's conversion, but they had refused to believe the tale. He had disappeared from the sight of men, and it was easy for them to persuade themselves that the story had been invented by the Christians. Now that they could no longer shut their eyes to the truth,

they attacked him publicly, bidding him prove his words, and he, arguing from their own Law and from the Prophets, put them all to silence.

He had beaten them on their own ground and shamed them openly; their only thought was vengeance. This man was dangerous; he should be put to death. They plotted secretly; but God is over all, and warning reached the disciples in time. The Jews were guarding the city gates lest their prey should escape them; the soldiers of the Ethnarch had been pressed into the service; there was need for prompt action.

In the dead of the night the friends of the Apostles let him down in a basket from a window in the side of the wall. It was thus that he escaped, fleeing for his life into the darkness—the man who had ridden proudly out from Jerusalem, the trusted messenger of the High Priest, no longer Saul the Pharisee, but Paul the Apostle.

CHAPTER III

" JESUS IS THE CHRIST "

ST. PAUL himself, in his Epistle to the Galatians, tells us what followed on that hurried flight from Damascus. " I went," he says, " to Jerusalem to see Peter." We can imagine how great was his longing to see and speak with those who had been the dearest friends and the closest companions of the Master during His life on earth, more especially St. Peter, the rock on which Christ had built His Church, and whom He had bidden " feed His sheep " when He, the Good Shepherd, should have ascended to His Father.

As Paul entered Jerusalem, which he had left three years before under such different circumstances, strange thoughts and memories must have crowded upon him. Few, if any, there knew of the wonderful events that had taken place at Damascus. Some, indeed, had heard vague rumours of the truth, but had

almost forgotten the story, for nothing more had been heard of the young scribe who had been so strangely converted to Christianity. But the bitter persecution of which Saul had been the leader was still fresh in the memory of the faithful at Jerusalem, and when he appeared suddenly in the Holy City assuring them that he was their friend, all shrank from him in horror. What was the meaning of this? they asked themselves. Was it a new trick to spy upon them, that he might drag them to torture and to death? It was hard to believe that he was a disciple.

To St. Paul's great heart and sensitive spirit the trial must have been bitter indeed, bringing back to him afresh the memory of those years when he had "kicked against the goad." In this dark moment God raised up to him a friend—Joseph, surnamed Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus—who "took him by the hand and brought him to the Apostles." There is a very old tradition that Barnabas and Saul had been students together in the school of Rabbi Gamaliel, and that Barnabas had long hoped for his conversion. However that may be, making himself Saul's

spokesman, he poured out to the Apostles the wonderful story of the vision on the Damascus road, and the events which had followed. St. Peter and St. James seem at the moment to have been alone in Jerusalem. They welcomed Paul as a friend and brother, and invited him to join them in the preaching of the Word.

It was only three years ago since Saul of Tarsus had ridden forth to Damascus as the trusted legate of the Sanhedrin. The hopes of Israel had centred round the brilliant young doctor of the Law who had seemed so full of promise. Then there had been a silence; he had disappeared for a while, and strange rumours had reached them. Now there was no longer room for doubt or hope. He was back again in their midst—as their enemy. In the very synagogues where he had disputed so hotly against Stephen and the Nazarenes he was preaching that "Jesus is the Christ." The zeal and the learning of which the Pharisees had been so proud were dangerous weapons when turned against themselves. His preaching must be stopped at all costs and at once. Saul must die.

But the faithful were aware of the danger,

from the sea, with which it was connected by the River Orontes. Stately buildings of white marble glittered amongst the palm-trees on the plain, and refreshing streams flowed through the groves of laurel and myrtle that surrounded the heathen temples which were to be seen on every side. Half Greek, half Syrian in its population, ships of all countries thronged its harbour, and men of all nations jostled each other in its streets. The hill-sides were crowned with Greek and Roman villas, standing in the midst of fragrant gardens. The aim and end of all this motley population was enjoyment and pleasure: "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die."

Surrounded by the corruptions of a pagan city, the Jews of Antioch, sole worshippers of the one true God, had kept themselves unspotted from the world. The eyes of all who clung to any ideal of honour or of virtue turned instinctively to the synagogue. There were many Gentile proselytes who were ready to receive the Word. If the teaching of Israel, with all its minute observances of the Law, had seemed to them noble and pure, how much

more the Christian Faith with its message at once so simple and so sublime.

Then came suddenly the news of Peter's vision at Joppa, and how God had bidden him share the gift of life with the Gentiles. The brethren who brought the wonderful tidings were no longer content to speak to the Jews alone; they began to preach Jesus to the pagan Greeks.

The moment was ripe; a great number were converted, and the Church at Antioch increased daily.

In due time rumours of what was passing reached Jerusalem. St. Peter, still glowing with the revelation and the vision of Joppa, was absent. The faithful grew uneasy. Were not the brethren at Antioch going a little too far? Was there no longer to be any barrier at all between Jew and Gentile? Was the uncircumcised pagan to rub shoulders in this way with God's elect? They resolved to send a trustworthy witness to Antioch, to judge if the Hand of God were really in the work. For this mission they chose Barnabas, himself a Hellenist, as the Jews born in Greek cities were called by those of Judea. The

state of things in Antioch filled him with joy and consolation, for God's Spirit was manifestly there. Jewish and Gentile Christians were as brothers, rivals in nothing but virtue. He remained there to help in the ministry, and many more were added to the Church by his preaching.

But it was impossible for Barnabas to see the grace of God working thus amongst the Gentiles without thinking of Paul, set apart as he knew by the Lord for this very work. Surely now was the appointed time.

He determined to go to Tarsus. Seeking out his friend, he brought him back with him to Antioch, where they laboured together for a year in a work that was abundantly blessed by God.

The pagans of Antioch began at last to notice this new sect that had arisen in their midst, and to distinguish it from the synagogue of the Jews. Hearing that Christ was the name of the God they worshipped, they coined in contempt the name of "Christians," by which they called His followers. Thus it came to pass that "the faithful were called Christians first at Antioch."

Now about this time certain holy men having come down from Jerusalem, one amongst them named Agabus prophesied that there would shortly be a great famine in Judea. Knowing the poverty of the Church in Jerusalem, the faithful at Antioch generously resolved to send help to their poorer brethren. Each gave what he could, and Paul and Barnabas were chosen to carry the contributions to the Holy City. They were accompanied by Titus, a young pagan convert, a little to the consternation of some of the faithful in Jerusalem who were inclined to look with horror on this wholesale association with Gentiles. St. Paul took care to consult the Apostles about a matter on which there was evidently a division of opinion in the Church. Conscious of their support and approval, he could afford to ignore the complaints of those who could not see that the faith of Christ was anything but an addition to the Law of Moses.

He was now in a very different position from that which he had occupied on his first visit to Jerusalem. The chosen representative of the Christians in Antioch, selected with

Barnabas to bear their alms to the Church at Jerusalem, he was looked upon by all with respect. It is hardly likely that the Christians confined their charity to the brethren alone. Those of the Jews who were in any way connected with them would be likely to receive help also, and Paul, as one of the administrators of the relief, would have many chances of speaking to them of Christ. A door seemed to be open before him, but God's will was not there.

Praying in the Temple one day, he saw his Lord in a vision, who bade him "make haste and depart out of Jerusalem."

Paul pleaded to remain; the witness of one who had been such an open enemy, he urged, would surely bear fruit. "Depart," replied the Master, "for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

He returned to Antioch, there to wait in prayer and patience until his mission should be made known to him.

CHAPTER IV

BY LAND AND SEA

THE faithful at Antioch were preparing by a season of prayer and fasting for an approaching feast, when the Holy Spirit spoke to the chief Pastors amongst them. "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," was the heavenly message; whereupon the Elders, laying their hands upon the two Apostles in solemn consecration, sent them forth to spread the faith of Christ.

Taking ship in the harbour of Seleucia, they sailed out on the blue waters of the Mediterranean to where, fanned by soft sea breezes and crowned with the forests of cedar and cypress to which she owed her name, the island of Cyprus lay midway between the shores of the Great Sea. Landing at Salamis, they preached in the synagogues throughout the island, and so came in due time to Paphos on the western coast, famous as the seat of the

Roman Government, and the centre of the worship of Venus.

The rumour that two distinguished strangers were giving public disputations throughout the island came to the ears of Sergius Paulus, the Roman Pro-Consul. He sent a courteous invitation to Barnabas and Paul to discourse before him upon their new philosophy.

The more educated Romans no longer believed in the pagan gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome; but the soul of man tends ever upwards, and craves for something to satisfy its aspirations. Thus it had come to pass that the Roman Governor had made a friend of a Jewish astrologer and magician named Bar-jesus, who called himself by the pretentious name of Elymas, or the "Wise Man." A student of nature, and learned in the uncanny arts of the Orientals, he used his knowledge to impress men with the idea that he possessed supernatural powers. The news of the Apostles' arrival filled him with alarm. If these men were once allowed to gain the ear of the Pro-Consul, his influence would be in danger, and he had no intention of losing

his important position as friend and counsellor at the Roman Court.

A large gathering assembled to hear the strangers' discourse. Their opening speech made a visible impression on the Governor, whilst the arguments that Elymas brought forward against them failed altogether in their effect. Losing at last both his temper and his discretion, the "Wise Man," turning to his noble patron, spoke hotly against the newcomers and declared their teaching to be entirely false.

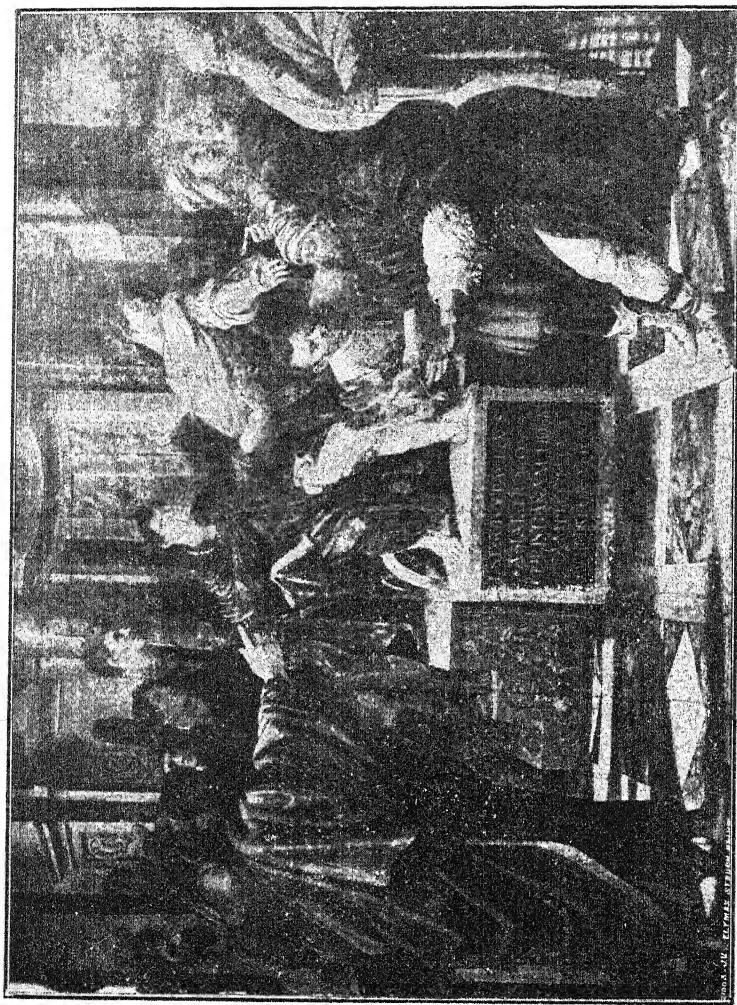
For Paul God's moment had come. At Antioch and in the Jewish synagogues he had been content to take the second place; but here, in the Court of the Roman Governor, he, a Roman citizen and the chosen Apostle of the Gentiles, felt the Spirit moving him to speak. With flashing eyes he confronted the man who was trying to turn a soul from the truth, and denounced him as the tool of Satan. "And now behold," he cried, "the Hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind for a time, not seeing the sun."

A great fear fell upon the assembly as Paul ceased speaking, and Elymas stretched out

groping hands into the darkness for help. The power of God was visibly with the strangers, and the Pro-Consul himself was their first convert.

Their ministry at Paphos ended, the missionaries set sail for the province of Pamphylia, in Asia Minor, which was to be the next stage in their journey. But the low-lying, fever-stricken coast of Pamphylia, following closely on the strain of the conflict at Paphos, proved fatal to St. Paul, who was attacked by illness. It was resolved to give up for the present the idea of preaching in Pamphylia, and to strike northwards into the Roman Province of Galatia, where the fresh mountain breezes would give the invalid the best chance of recovery. This plan, however, seems to have been strongly objected to by Mark, who refused to go on with the Apostles, and returned to Jerusalem.

It was no doubt a serious undertaking to cross the mountains, infested as they were by robbers, into a wild and unknown country, and one which might well have daunted a less enterprising spirit than that of St. Paul. None the less the leader of the little band was



THE CONVERSION OF THE GOVERNOR OF CYPRUS.

From a Raphael cartoon.

To face p. 38



deeply hurt at what he considered the desertion of his companion—the looking back of one who had put his hand to the plough.

Over hill and mountain journeyed the two Apostles, through the scanty pasture-lands broken here and there by a sheet of water, where the wild swans curved their shining necks to admire their own reflection, and the storks stood meditatively on one leg amongst the reeds. Here and there the flat-roofed huts of a miserable little village met the eyes of the travellers; or in the evening the distant glow of a watchfire on the hills surrounded by a cluster of shepherds' tents reminded them of the birth night of that Master for love of Whom they had left country and kinsfolk to become homeless wanderers upon the earth.

“In perils of robbers, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea . . . in labour and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness.”

At last they came to the stately city of Pisidian Antioch, with its mingled population of Romans, Orientals, and Jews; and entering the synagogue upon the Sabbath day, took their places in the seats set apart for those

who desired to address the congregation. The Jewish rulers were not slow to mark the presence of the strangers. "Men and brethren," they said, "if you have any word of exhortation to the people, speak." Then Paul arose, and claiming the attention of the congregation with the vivid gesture of the hand so often mentioned by St. Luke, preached to them the Gospel of Christ.

A breathless hush fell upon the assembly as he spoke. When the Apostles left the synagogue, they were beset by a surging crowd, thirsting for further knowledge. The Gentile proselytes spread the news among their pagan townsfolk. When the Apostles made their next appearance in the synagogue it could not contain the multitudes that had gathered to see and hear them.

The Rulers of the Jews were not a little vexed at the turn things were taking. They had succeeded, in the course of many years, in making only a few proselytes, and these mostly women; whereas the whole city was running after these strangers, who seemed to think as much of the Gentiles as of the Chosen People.

When Paul began his exhortation, and they

marked the deep interest and the rapt faces of the congregation, their vexation developed into something warmer still. Rising abruptly from their seats, they contradicted openly the words of the Apostle, hoping thus to put a stop to his preaching. The indignation shown by the congregation at this untimely interruption only served as a goad to their fury. Casting off all restraint, they broke out into blasphemies against the name of Jesus.

Patience and endurance had gone far enough. Solemnly turning on their opponents, the Apostles reminded them that the Word had in the first place been preached to them. "Since you reject it, and deem yourselves unworthy of eternal life," they said, "behold we turn to the Gentiles."

Shaking the dust of the synagogue from their feet, they left the building, followed by a rejoicing crowd eager to embrace the Faith.

But the Jews were not in a mood to take their defeat calmly. They determined to ruin these men whom they already hated with all the bitterness of their race. They found the tools they needed in the noble Roman ladies who had become their proselytes, and who,

urged on by their persuasions, undertook to prejudice the Roman Rulers against the strangers.

It was easy enough to suggest that such men were a danger to law and order, always a powerful argument with a Roman. In a short space of time an order was issued banishing the newcomers from Antioch and the surrounding country. Paul and Barnabas therefore departed; but they left behind them a thriving Christian community "filled with joy and the Holy Ghost."

In Iconium, the next Galatian city which they visited and where they remained for some time, the events of Pisidian Antioch repeated themselves. Their preaching was fruitful, and the converts many. God showed His presence with His servants by several miracles; but as the little body of disciples grew, so did the jealous spite of the Jews who would not receive God's message. A plot was set on foot to scourge and stone the Apostles, who, being warned in time, fled to Lystra and Derbe, two cities of Galatia in the district which was called Lycaonia. Here, where there were no syna-

gogues, amongst a simple country-folk who still believed in the ancient gods of Greece and Rome, it might be expected that the missionaries would be left in peace to pursue their ministry. For a time, indeed, it was so, but not for long.

The Apostles were preaching in Lystra. Amongst the crowd which had assembled to hear them was a poor man who had been a cripple from his birth. The eyes of Paul, searching the faces of the listeners for an answering gleam of faith, fell on the lame man lying before him.

"Arise," he said suddenly, "stand upright on thy feet"; and the cripple leaped and walked.

The crowd broke out into cries of astonishment and wonder. "The gods are come down amongst us," they shouted, deciding at once that Barnabas was Jupiter and Paul Mercury. Conscious of the tumult, but not understanding what was said, as the people spoke in their own Lycaonian tongue, the Apostles withdrew quietly from the crowd, whilst the populace flocked joyfully to the temple of Jupiter outside the city to tell the

good tidings to the priests. In all haste the sacrificial bulls were brought out and decked with garlands, while the priests, white-robed and flower-crowned, led them in solemn procession to the gate of the city, there to offer sacrifice to the gods who had revealed themselves to men.

The truth at last dawned on the Apostles. Rushing out to meet the procession, they rent their garments in horror at the thought of the intended sacrilege.

"We are but men like yourselves," they cried, "whose message to you is that you should give up these superstitions and worship the one true God."

But the Lystrans had no intention of giving up the festival, and were in no mood to listen to their preaching. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the sacrifice was prevented, and the people dispersed, angry and sullen, to their homes.

It was at this moment that there appeared in Lystra a little band of Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, who had resolved to dog the footsteps of the Apostles, and to hinder if possible their mission. It was easy

enough for them to work upon the discontent of the people, assuring them that the strangers were impostors, their miracles nothing but a trick, and their teaching so mischievous that they had narrowly escaped a stoning at the hands of the respectable citizens of Iconium.

Egged on by these bitter enemies of Christ, the people fell upon Paul in the streets of the city, and having stoned him, cast his bleeding body outside their walls, believing him to be dead.

But there were some in Lystra in whose hearts the teaching of the Apostles had found a quick response. Hearing the sad news, they hastened to the spot to perform the last rites for their beloved master. To their unutterable joy they found him alive, and able with their help to return to the city. There was one house at least in Lystra where Paul would ever be a welcome guest. It was that of Eunice, a Jewess, who, with her mother Lois and her young son Timothy had been amongst the first to embrace the faith.

Lystra was no longer a safe place for the Apostles, and in all haste they departed. Returning by the same way as they had come,

they stayed for a time in every city where they had preached the Faith, confirming the brethren, reminding them that through much tribulation they must enter the Kingdom of God, and ordaining Elders to minister to the Christian communities which they were leaving behind them. Then, coming down to Perge in Pamphylia, they preached to the people of those parts also; after which, taking ship at Attalia, they set sail for Antioch in Syria, the starting-point and the end of their journey.

CHAPTER V

THE OLD LAW OR THE NEW?

THE return of Paul and Barnabas was hailed with great joy by the brethren in Antioch, who, having listened eagerly to the account of their mission, gave thanks and glorified God.

The rumour of how the Gentiles had flocked to embrace the Faith spread rapidly throughout Syria, and was received with great rejoicings. We have already seen how the Jewish Christians in Antioch had given the right hand of fellowship to those of the pagan Greeks who had received the Word, treating them on a footing of equality with themselves. In this the other Churches of Syria had followed their example.

Those of the Jews who had at different times gone out from Judea to settle in foreign countries found themselves indeed in quite a different position from that of their kinsmen in Jerusalem. Forced as they were in the

interests of trade to mix to a certain extent with their Gentile neighbours, the minute observance of their Law became wellnigh impossible. Relaxing, therefore, the minor points of this observance, while holding fast to the worship of the one true God and the great precepts of morality, many of the Jews who were scattered abroad throughout the civilized world had begun to look upon the pagans as something other than unclean "Gentile dogs," to come in contact with whom was pollution.

It was amongst these Jews of wider mind that Christianity was to find some of the most noble of its converts, whilst the "zealots of the Law" remained to the end its bitterest enemies.

In Judea, however, things were very different. For many years the Scribes and Pharisees had confined their teaching to the minor points of the Law alone. They were content to centre all their energies in discussions, the only end of which was to make the perfect observance of the Law an intolerable burden to the people. So little were the prophecies studied or interpreted that, full as they were

of allusions to the Christ, "He had come to His own, and His own had known Him not," but had condemned Him to a felon's death.

Arguments as to whether an egg laid on the eve of a feast-day might be eaten or not, or whether in the offering of the tithes a tenth part of the stalks ought to be included with the grain, absorbed the interest of the Doctors of the Law. What wonder that the Lord of justice had called them blind guides and hypocrites, binding burdens on men's shoulders that they themselves would not touch with one finger, neither entering the Kingdom of Heaven themselves nor suffering others to enter.

And yet Our Lord Himself, no less than the twelve Apostles, was of the Jewish race, born under the Law. It was hard for Israel to grasp the truth that the Law of Moses was to disappear in the wider Law of Christ. He Himself had said that He had come not to destroy the Law but to fulfil. They forgot that He had also said: "Ye cannot put new wine into old bottles."

Many of the Christian converts at Jerusalem, who, like Nicodemus and Joseph of

Arimathea, were Pharisees learned in the Law, did not see how it could be possible for a man to become a Christian unless he first became a Jew—to embrace the Faith of Christ unless he first embraced the Law of Moses. The Divine revelation to St. Peter at Joppa had indeed opened the eyes of a few; but it was easy for others to apply it to the particular case of Cornelius without accepting it for the Gentiles in general.

Further, as an impenetrable barrier between Israel and the nations, stood the Jewish pride of race. They had grown so accustomed to the thought that they, the Chosen People, were placed on a pinnacle above all other men—to draw back their very garments from the polluting contact with the “Gentile dog” who passed them in the street—that the idea of the breaking down of the wall of separation filled them with dismay.

The news therefore of the return of the two Apostles and their missionary journey was much discussed in Jerusalem. Certain Jewish Christians made their appearance in Antioch, and gave out, not without stretching the truth to its utmost limits, that they had come from

James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, held in universal veneration as the kinsman of the Lord Himself.

It was not given to these men as it had been to Barnabas, the lawfully appointed delegate of the Church, to see the Spirit of God in the community at Antioch. They were, on the contrary, filled with horror at the sight of uncircumcised Gentiles associating with Jewish Christians on terms of equality. St. Peter himself even sat at the same table with converted pagans, treating them as friends and brothers.

Such behaviour seemed to these self-constituted critics to strike at the very foundations of the Law. Assuming an authority which they did not possess, they intimated to St. Peter that his conduct in this matter was giving grave disedification. Let the Gentiles become Christians by all means, they said, but let them first be circumcised and observe the Law of Moses, without which it would be impossible for the Church of Jerusalem to acknowledge them as brethren.

For a moment even the confidence of St. Peter seems to have been shaken. By nature

ready to throw himself into the most hazardous enterprises at a word from his Lord, and apt to waver and mistrust his own conduct in cooler moments, he allowed himself to be so far influenced as to withdraw in some degree from his familiar intercourse with the Greek converts. Barnabas seemed inclined to follow his lead in the matter; Paul alone saw the danger and flung himself into the breach. The peace, nay, the very existence of his beloved communities in Galatia, were at stake. His burning words of expostulation brought the great heart and generous mind of St. Peter immediately to his side, strong in the conviction that his original line of conduct had been right, and ready to defend it to the uttermost.

The pretended envoys were discouraged for a time by the failure of their schemes, but St. Peter having left Antioch, their discontent broke out once more. They demanded that the case should be submitted to the Church at Jerusalem, and Paul and Barnabas, who heartily concurred in this suggestion, set out at once for the Holy City, telling as they passed through Phenice and Samaria the good

THE OLD LAW OR THE NEW? 53

tidings of how God was calling the Gentiles to the Faith.

The Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem gave a warm welcome to the travellers, who lost no time in making known to them how God had blessed their work among the Gentiles. But the zealots for the Law were only awaiting their opportunity, and the outcry arose that the Gentile converts must be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. It was decided that the Apostles and Elders with the whole Church should meet in council to consider the matter.

The fault-finders were the first to speak, and long and weary were their arguments. When at last they had finished, St. Peter arose. Reminding them of the revelation at Joppa, he explained how the Holy Ghost had given testimony that, "God purifying the Gentiles by faith, had put them on the same footing as the Jews."

"Now therefore," he asked, "why do ye put a yoke on the necks of the disciples which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?"

In the hush that followed the words of the Apostle to whom the Master had given the

Keys of His Kingdom, Paul and Barnabas, who as yet had remained silent, rose to speak. They made known the signs and wonders that had accompanied their work amongst the Gentiles—visible tokens of God's presence and approval. The result of the Council was summed up by James, speaking with authority as the Bishop of Jerusalem.

"To the Lord was His own work known from the beginning of the world," he said, after having referred to the words of St. Peter which reminded them of the revelation by which God had made known His will concerning the Gentiles. Those who had turned to God were not to be circumcised, but they must accept four fundamental rules of purity.

A concession having been thus made to the feelings of the discontented party, whilst the Gentile converts were delivered from the intolerable burden so much dreaded by St. Paul, the decree was formally drawn up. Judas and Silas, or Silvanus, two members of the Church at Jerusalem well known to all for their wisdom and holiness of life, were chosen to return to Antioch with Paul and

THE OLD LAW OR THE NEW? 55

Barnabas as bearers of the letter and decree of the Apostles.

The letter was strongly worded:

"The Apostles and the Elders to the brethren of the Gentiles that are at Antioch and in Syria and Cilicia, greeting.

" Forasmuch as we have heard that some going out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, *to whom we gave no commandment*; it hath seemed good to us, being assembled together to choose out men, and to send them unto you with *our well-beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves will also by word of mouth tell you the same things. For it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things. That ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication (marriage within the degrees forbidden by the Law): from which things keeping yourselves you shall do well. Fare ye well."

The decree having been read to the brethren in Antioch amidst universal rejoicings, the two delegates from Jerusalem remained some time amongst them, preaching and exhorting them to stand fast in the Faith. But when the time came for their return to Jerusalem, Judas alone went back to the Holy City, Silas remaining behind at Antioch.

Sympathy for the wider views that prevailed there, the growing reverence and admiration for St. Paul, which was so soon to unite him with the great Apostle of the Gentiles in his missionary work, may both have influenced him in his decision.

St. Paul was growing restless. A longing had arisen in his heart to revisit the Christian communities across the sea, and to see how they had prospered in his absence. He proposed to Barnabas that they should return and visit the brethren in every city where they had preached the name of the Lord. Barnabas agreed readily to the suggestion, but he was strongly of the opinion that his cousin John Mark, whom they had met again in Jerusalem, should be of the party. Against this Paul resolutely set his face. Mark, who

THE OLD LAW OR THE NEW? 57

had deserted them before, might do so again, he argued; the risks were too great. The discussion ended in the separation of the two Apostles, who were to meet no more in this world. Barnabas went with Mark to Cyprus, their native city, where he is said to have remained, ministering to his fellow-countrymen until his death. Paul, taking Silas, bade farewell to the brethren, and, commended by their prayers to the grace of God, set forth upon his second missionary journey.

CHAPTER VI

“ COMBATS WITHOUT, FEARS WITHIN ”

PASSING rapidly through Syria and Cilicia, where they made known the decree to the faithful, Paul and Silas crossed the sea, and journeyed northwards to Lystra.

Several years had now passed since Eunice and her household had been won to Christ by the preaching of the Apostles, during which time Timothy had grown from youth into manhood. Paul, who in earlier days had been struck by the lovable qualities of the young disciple, could not fail to notice how the gifts of grace had completed the gifts of nature. In this young man, loved and respected by all the Christians in Lystra and Iconium, and already exercising a strong influence for good on all around him, he recognized the stuff of an Apostle, and at once appointed him to help them in the work. It was the beginning of a faithful

friendship that was to last until death. To Paul, Timothy was to be ever his "beloved son in the faith," "more at one with him in heart and soul" than any other of his companions; whilst Timothy, ready to lay down his life for his beloved father in Christ, gave to Paul that devoted and understanding sympathy of which his sensitive and suffering spirit had often so great a need.

From Lystra Paul, with his companions, proceeded to Iconium and Pisidian Antioch, where, having made known the decree to the brethren, he strengthened and confirmed them in the knowledge of Christ, and won by his preaching many new converts to the Faith.

His original plan had been to strike westwards into the Roman province of Asia, but, checked by a revelation that such was not God's pleasure, the little band resolved to go northwards to Bithynia. Again the Divine guidance intervened; nothing remained for the travellers but to strike across Mysia, the northern district of the province of Asia, to the seaport of Troas, where they awaited the further manifestation of God's will.

Not only was the field of their future

mission to be made fully known to them in this sea-coast city, but they were destined to meet there one who was to be a most faithful friend of St. Paul as well as the historian of his travels.

Was Paul suffering from an attack of that chronic sickness that had laid him low in Pamphylia on his first missionary journey—that “stake in the flesh” which seemed to him such a hindrance to God’s work that he had thrice besought the Lord that it might depart from him? We do not know. But it was in this way or in some other that he made the acquaintance of “Luke the beloved physician,” known later as “Luke the Evangelist.” The intercourse between the two men resulted in the winning over of the Greek physician to the cause of Christ. Fired by the burning words of St. Paul, he resolved to give his whole life to God’s service.

Whither was the spirit leading them? Ships from many countries lay at anchor in the harbour of Troas—which was to bear them on the Master’s errand?

In the silence of the night He made known His will to His servants.

There appeared to Paul in a vision a man from Macedonia beseeching him with outstretched hands, "Come over into Macedonia and help us!" and all doubt was at an end.

Setting sail at once they landed at Neapolis, and, crossing the hills which lay before them, entered the beautiful city of Philippi, a thriving Roman colony.

To the people of Macedonia, simple, honest, and hard-working, the question of the immortality of the soul and the existence of the one true God had been for long subjects of the deepest interest. But Paul's rule had always been to preach first to the Jews, and having heard that the Sabbath meetings were held in a quiet nook by the riverside, there being no synagogue and but few Jews in Philippi, he resolved to seek them out.

The gathering was a small one indeed, consisting only of a few women, who were engaged in prayer. The leader of the little group was a Gentile proselyte called Lydia, a woman of wealth and position who dealt in the purple-dyed garments of Thyatira. The preaching of Paul found an immediate response in her heart, and she received baptism

with all her household. Eager in her gratitude to do what she could in return for the precious gift of the Faith, she would not be content until Paul and his companions had promised to be her guests; and her house soon became the centre of Christianity in the city. In the period of peace and calm which followed, the good news spread rapidly among the people; men and women of all classes hastened to join the ranks of the Christians.

But the house of Lydia was not their only meeting-place. The Apostles still preached in the quiet retreat by the riverside known to all as the usual haunt of the Jews, which was visited by many who would otherwise have had no opportunity of hearing the Word.

Now it chanced that there lived not far from this place a slave-girl possessed by a spirit which enabled her to foretell the future. She had come to be considered as a sort of oracle in Philippi, and her pagan masters made a great deal of money by her divinations. Meeting one day St. Paul and his companions on their way to the place of prayer, she followed them.

"These men are the servants of the most

High God, who preach to you the way of salvation," she cried, and every day at the same time the scene was repeated.

Such a testimony was not to the mind of the Apostle. Turning at last to the girl as she followed them, "Depart from her," he said, "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," and the spirit left her at his word. The poor slave was now in her right mind, but the power of foretelling the future was gone, and with it the wealth of her masters. Seizing in their fury upon Paul and Silas, they dragged them before the magistrates. To have told the truth would have been worse than useless; they therefore accused the Apostles of preaching a new religion, and of teaching customs which were against the Roman Law. The fact that Silas as well as Paul was a Roman citizen would have ensured them respectful treatment, but amidst the general tumult it was impossible for them to make themselves heard. Their enemies had been careful to state that they were Jews, for the Jews had lately come under the displeasure of the Emperor, and had been banished from Rome. Without inquiring further into the matter,

the magistrates ordered that the strangers should be first beaten with rods and then imprisoned.

The scourging was inflicted publicly in the market-place, after which Paul and Silas, bruised and bleeding, were thrown into a dungeon, their feet being so secured in the stocks that every movement of their aching bodies caused them pain. They had borne their sufferings bravely for the love of their Lord, and now in the weary hours of darkness they comforted their sad hearts by singing hymns and psalms to His glory. The voice of praise was an unwonted sound in that gloomy prison, and one which filled the inmates with wonder. The thick walls were still ringing to the echoes of the sacred song when a sudden earthquake shook the building to its foundations, bursting open the doors and freeing the prisoners from their chains. The gaoler, rushing to the spot and seeing the open doors, supposed that his charges had made good their escape. Disgrace and death would certainly be the penalty; it would be better to die at once by his own hand. As his sword flashed from the scabbard a quiet voice spoke

from out the darkness: "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here."

The keeper of the prison took courage. Calling for lights he secured the other prisoners who had been probably too terrified by the earthquake to think of escape, for not one of them was missing. His duty done, he fell trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas, who alone had remained calm and steadfast. "Masters," he cried, "what must I do to be saved?"

By this time the whole household had gathered together, and there was work to be done for the Master. The two Apostles, forgetting the pain of their wounds, spoke the words of life to these new disciples, who drank them in with thirsty ears. Taking Paul and Silas, whose pitiable state was visible to all, they washed and dressed their wounds at a fountain of water, where they in their turn received the Sacrament of Baptism. A feast was prepared in the gaoler's house to which the Apostles were brought by their new disciples, while the gladness of Christ reigned in the hearts of all. Thus ended amidst general rejoicings a night which had been so eventful.

The magistrates, who in the meanwhile had had time to reflect on their hasty action, were in no comfortable frame of mind. The Christians of Philippi had very probably protested against the unjust manner in which the prisoners had been treated, for there were people of influence amongst them. In any case the representatives of the law decided that the wisest and safest course would be to get rid of the strangers as quickly and secretly as possible. The day had scarcely dawned when messengers appeared at the prison door to announce that the magistrates were graciously pleased to set Paul and Silas at liberty. The gaoler, greatly relieved, hastened to tell the good news to the Apostles, but Paul turned quietly to the lictors who were following. "What," he said, "after having caused two Roman citizens to be publicly beaten and cast into prison, do they expect to send them away secretly? No, let them come and bring us out themselves."

The consternation of the magistrates can be imagined! These men were Roman citizens! What had they done? They might have to answer with their lives for yesterday's

proceedings. It was contrary to the law to scourge a Roman, and these men had not even been tried. Let such a thing but reach the ears of the Governor of Macedonia, and their career as magistrates would be for ever at an end.

It was not a moment for dignity. Hastening to the prison they tremblingly besought the strangers to pardon their mistake, and to leave the city at once. This the Apostles agreed to do, but at their own time and convenience. Returning to the house of Lydia, they reassured the brethren, who had been in great anxiety as to their fate. Then, having set all in order, Paul and Silas set forth once more on their travels, leaving Luke and Timothy in charge of the community at Philippi—that community which Paul was to speak of later as “ his joy and his crown.”

The proposed route lay through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, a seaport city on the coast of the Ægean Sea, whose position caused it to become later one of the centres of Christianity. The chief industry of the town was its woven stuffs of brilliant hue, and the coarser fabrics of goat’s-hair which were

used for tent-coverings. Every Jewish boy, no matter what might be the wealth and position of his parents, was compelled to learn a trade, so that he could if necessary support himself in later life. Now it happened that this very trade of tent-making was the one which Paul had been taught in his youth, and at which he worked for his daily bread when he was able to do so. His intention being to remain for the present at Thessalonica, he took a lodging in the house of a Jew called Jason, a weaver himself by trade, whose workshop would therefore offer to the Apostle all that he required for the daily toil.

There was a synagogue in the city, and thither on the Sabbath went the two Apostles, eager to preach Jesus to the Jews. But the thought of a poor and humble Saviour dying for their salvation on the Cross had no charms for these men. They looked for a Messias who should come as a conqueror to restore the power to Israel, and conversions were few. It was quite otherwise with the Gentile proselytes, who listened eagerly and were baptized in great numbers. In course of time, seeing the fruitlessness of their preaching to the

Jews, the Apostles left the synagogue and began to instruct their converts in the house of Jason, where Paul could talk to them as he worked. The little community increased daily, and it was not long before the Holy Spirit made known His Presence amongst them by miracles and supernatural gifts.

The Jews, as usual, saw the results of Paul's preaching with envy and vexation, for nearly all their proselytes had deserted them. An opportunity of injuring those whom they chose to consider as their enemies soon presented itself. These men, they declared, were sowing treason against the Roman Government. Had they not asserted that there was another King, one Jesus, to whom they owed allegiance rather than to Cæsar? It was not difficult to urge the people to fury against them by such arguments as these. Egged on by the Jews they attacked the house of Jason, whom, in the absence of Paul and Silas, they dragged before the magistrates. The Governor of Macedonia, who had his official residence at Thessalonica, was in the city. The magistrates, anxious to hush up the riot as quickly as possible, bound Jason over to be

surety for his guests, and deferred the trial until later.

In the meantime Paul and Silas had returned, and the Christians were beseeching them to seek safety in flight. Yielding at last to the entreaties of their brethren, who conducted them with all precautions outside the gates of the city, they said a sorrowful farewell to these faithful disciples, and took the road to Beroea.

CHAPTER VII

“ WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED ”

THE Jews of Beroea were a nobler race than their brethren of Thessalonica. In the light of the Gospel preached to them by Paul, they studied the writings of the prophets, and found in them the foreshadowing of a Messias who should suffer and die for His people. Many believed and received Baptism together with their Gentile proselytes, amongst whom were several ladies of rank.

A fruitful field of labour seemed to lie before the Apostles; but Satan was watching over his own interests. The news that Paul was preaching at Beroea came to the ears of the Jews in Thessalonica, who determined to go there and repeat the process which had been so successful in their own city. Finding that their efforts to stir up the rulers of the synagogue against the new teachers were vain, they addressed themselves to the common people, using the same arguments that had

done so much mischief already. The situation became dangerous for St. Paul, and he was forced once more to seek safety in flight.

Leaving Silas behind at Beroea with Timothy, who had again rejoined them, to confirm and strengthen the new disciples, he took ship to Athens. It was useless for the present to continue his work in Macedonia, for the Jews in Thessalonica were resolved to dog his footsteps from city to city. In his absence the storm would have time to blow over, and he could return again later.

Though fallen from her ancient splendour, Athens still retained to a certain extent, under the Roman rule, that reputation for learning and culture which had been hers when men called her the "School of the World." In no city of the ancients had art attained to such perfection. The masterpieces of Pheidias and Praxiteles, that have held the world breathless with wonder for twenty-three centuries, met the eye at every turn. The great statue of the goddess Athene, sixty feet high, which stood guard over the city, could be seen far out at sea, her golden helmet and spear-point sparkling in the sun.

The worship of beauty had been the cult of the Greeks—human beauty and human intellect. They did not know as yet that the Beauty which is eternal and the Wisdom which is Divine had come to dwell amongst men; but now God's messenger was at their gates.

The glory of Athens was indeed departed. What remained to her was but the outer husk which concealed the emptiness within. It was this that struck the great Apostle as he wandered through the streets and byways of the city. He—

"Looked to Hymettus and the purple heather,
Looked to Peiræus and the purple sea,"

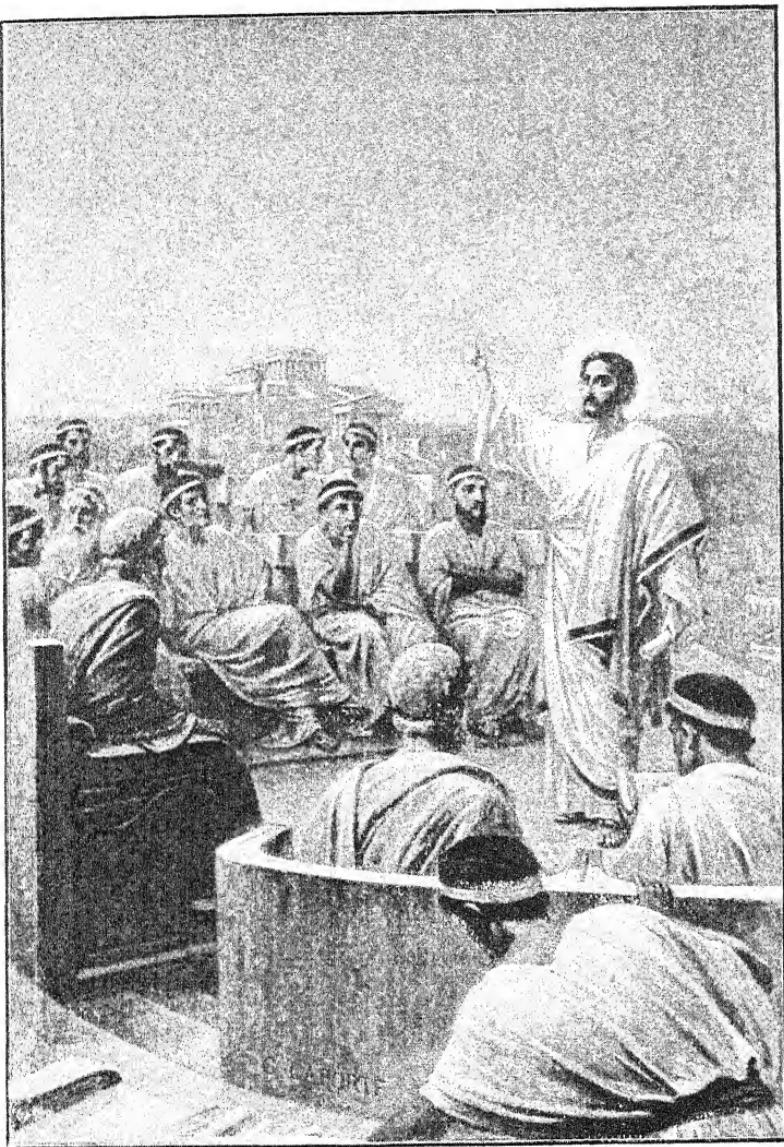
and to him—on fire with the living message of salvation—the city seemed "wholly given to idolatry."

Having preached in the synagogue, apparently without result, Paul turned his attention to the Gentile population—"light-minded and curious men," St. Luke calls them, "whose only delight was in hearing and telling some new thing." Day after day he went to the Agora, or market-place, the chief resort of the philosophers as well as of all the idlers in

the city. Here a stranger who had any pretensions to learning would certainly be set upon and questioned, an opportunity which Paul could be trusted not to miss.

The more light-minded of his hearers were ready to make fun of his teaching, while in a few of the philosophers it aroused a languid interest. Others, to whom there seemed something suspicious about this new religion, laid hold of Paul, and insisted that he should go up to the Hill of Mars and explain himself more clearly, for it lay with the great Council of the Areopagus to decide in all questions of religion.

To Paul it was a happy chance that forced him to speak in his Master's cause before the most learned and eminent men in Greece. The flower of Athenian learning and philosophy had assembled, ready to listen with good-natured contempt to this Oriental dreamer, whose barbarous Greek fell so inharmoniously upon their ears. The humble ambassador of Christ, standing alone and undaunted in their midst, began his discourse by alluding to an altar which he had found in his wanderings in the city, dedicated to "the unknown God."



ST. PAUL PREACHING AT ATHENS.

From a picture by Laporte. (By permission of Messrs. Bouasse Lebel.)



"What therefore you worship without knowing," he said, "that I preach to you." Explaining to them at length the nature of the one true God, "Who giveth to all life and breath and all things," and the desire of man's heart to find Him, he went on to speak of the resurrection of the dead; but his audience was already growing weary. The thought of a crucified and suffering God outraged their sense of beauty and refinement, and many scoffed openly at the suggestion. "We will hear thee again on this matter," said the more courteous among them, intimating gently that their patience—and therefore Paul's discourse—was at an end.

But in the hearts of a few out of that vast assembly a new life had sprung into being at the Apostle's words. Dionysius, one of the members of the Council of the Areopagus, and Damaris, a woman, amongst others, believed in the Christ.

To Paul, his mission in Athens seemed a hopeless failure. Heart-sick and weary, with no Timothy at hand to cheer his drooping spirit, his eyes turned to the prosperous seaport of Corinth. It was one of those com-

mercial centres with a mixed population of Greeks, Syrians, Romans, and Jews, which had so often before proved a fruitful field for his labours. Thither therefore he went; and having made the acquaintance of a Jewish couple, Aquila and Priscilla by name, whose trade, like his own, was the weaving of tent-cloth, he lodged in their house and shared their toil. Aquila and Priscilla, who had been driven out of Rome by the edict of Claudius, were probably already Christians. They were poor in goods, but rich in virtue, and their tender friendship did much to comfort Paul, who seems to have been suffering in body as well as in soul at the time.

He confined himself at first to preaching in the workshop of his friends, and it was not until he had been some time in Corinth that he began to speak publicly in the synagogue. His hosts were poor like himself, and the daily bread depended on their labours. As it was, he could preach only on the Sabbath—the week-days found him at his work. But the arrival of Silas and Timothy with generous offerings from the Churches of Macedonia set Paul free for the ministry. He had already

bourhood the growing Christian community, of which their former ruler was a prominent member. It was distinctly trying, and having appointed one Sosthenes in the place of Crispus, they bided their time for vengeance.

The moment seemed to them ripe when Gallio, the new Pro-Consul, was appointed to govern Achaia. This man would in all probability be anxious to begin his office by conciliating the Jews, who were a powerful body in Corinth.

Seizing the Apostle unawares, they dragged him before the judgment-seat of the Governor, accusing him of teaching a new religion contrary to the Roman Law. Gallio was an honest and upright man, who had, like most Romans, a strong prejudice against the Jews. He was, moreover, a good lawyer, and in a few moments had sifted the evidence sufficiently to see that the accusers had no case at all against their prisoner.

"If it were a question of injustice or transgression against the (Roman) law, O Jews," he said, "I would bear with you; but since it is a matter of words and names and your Law, settle it amongst yourselves. I will not

be judge in such matters." So saying, he drove them from the judgment-seat.

The people of Corinth, who had assembled out of curiosity and who themselves had no love for the Jews, seized the opportunity to indulge in a little outburst of feeling. Falling upon Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, they beat him soundly in the very presence of the Governor. This amounted to contempt of court; but Gallio, with true Roman haughtiness, and perhaps a touch of amusement, chose to ignore what they were doing, and to treat the whole affair as beneath his notice.

The Jews did not easily recover from their defeat, and henceforward the ministry of the Apostles went on unhindered. Many men and women of rank in Corinth embraced the Faith, amongst them being Erastus, treasurer of the city, Stephanas, Caius, and several members of the Roman colony. The greater number, however, were people of the working classes and slaves. Corinth was amongst the most corrupt of the pagan cities, and some of these neophytes had been rescued from a life that was worse than death, to be washed

from their sins in the cleansing waters of Baptism.

Three years had now gone by; the Church of Corinth was a strong and thriving body, and a desire arose in Paul's heart to revisit Jerusalem and Antioch. Going down to the seaport of Cenchrea, he set sail for the East, accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, who hoped to find in Ephesus a better market for their work. Landing with them, for the ship was to stay for a short time at Ephesus, Paul preached to the Jews in their synagogue. They besought him to remain with them for a time, but this Paul could not do. "I will return to you again, God willing," he said, and left them sorrowing.

CHAPTER VIII

“STRENGTH IN INFIRMITY”

HAVING saluted the Church in Jerusalem, Paul came to Antioch. The short stay which he made in the Holy City was enough to convince him that he would find small sympathy for his work in a community that still clung persistently to the idea that Christianity was but an extra adornment to the Mosaic Law. Their cold piety struck a chill to the great heart of Paul; but in Antioch he felt at home. Syria and the East were aglow with her light and her warmth; the spirit of Christ was in her midst.

The time of rejoicing was short. He had determined to know nothing “but Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” and for the faithful soldier of the Cross, the Cross was ever waiting. Some of those false brethren from whom the Apostle had suffered so much already had made their appearance amongst his beloved communities of Galatia, assuring them that they were only half Christian, and could

never, unless they consented to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses, be considered as the equals of the Jewish Christians. Paul, who had been their teacher, was, they declared, but a subordinate, and was in error on this point; *they* had come directly from the Twelve, and were to be trusted.

The Galatians were greatly troubled. The work that Paul had accomplished at the cost of so much toil and suffering was in danger of being undone.

Having written a letter in which he exhorted the communities of Galatia to hold fast to the truths that he had taught them, though "an angel from Heaven should teach otherwise," he despatched it by a trusty messenger. The next thing to be done was to bring his business at Antioch to an end that he might go in person to confirm his wavering flock.

Great was their joy and relief when Paul appeared once more amongst them. From city to city he went, setting all in order, and warning the disciples against the false teachers who had so disturbed their peace. The men who had given themselves out as "having come from the Twelve" disappeared suddenly

on the news of the Apostle's arrival; it was easy to prove that they were impostors.

The visit to Galatia completed, Paul, mindful of his promise, crossed the Province of Asia and came to Ephesus, where he found his old friends, Aquila and Priscilla. For three months he reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue. Many of them were won to Christ, but the larger body of unbelievers soon made the synagogue an impossible preaching-place, and he was forced to look elsewhere. During the rest of his stay in Ephesus, which was to last for two years, he disputed daily in "the school of one Tyrannus," probably using the lecture-hall during the evening hours when the pagan teacher did not require it. His own daily work would then be done, for with his own hands, we are told, he had to furnish what was necessary for himself and his companions. The hard day's work, followed by the evening's preaching, might well have exhausted a stronger frame than Paul's.

Insulted and persecuted by the unbelieving Jews, suffering in body, worn with toil, burdened with anxiety for his Christian converts in other lands, his life, as he himself expressed

it, was a "daily death." But it is under the shadow of the Cross that the Master's work thrives best; and the Faith spread not only in Ephesus, but through all the cities of Asia. Miracles were many. Garments that Paul had worn or touched were laid upon the sick and they recovered; evil spirits were cast out. In this heathen city where idols were worshipped with abominable rites, the devils seem to have had great power, and certain Jews who had been trying to cast out demons from possessed persons were very much astonished by the success of Paul and his companions. They concluded that the charm used by these men was more powerful than their own, and they listened carefully to learn it.

Entering the house of a maniac who was possessed by a demon, they called upon the evil spirit to come out of him—"in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches." The result was not quite what they had expected. The madman leaped upon them furiously. "Jesus I know and Paul I know; but who are you?" cried the devil. Bleeding and wounded, they scarce escaped with their lives.

Many who dealt in magic and sorcery—for

Ephesus was a centre of superstition—were struck with fear when they heard these things, and were converted to Christ. The Church in Asia was increasing rapidly; but Paul's labours there were destined to be brought suddenly to an end.

Besides being the capital of the Province and a great commercial centre, Ephesus was looked upon by the pagans as one of their sacred cities. Its temple of Diana was famous throughout the world for its beauty, although the worship of the Ephesian goddess appealed only to what is lowest and basest in man.

The time for the great annual festival was at hand. Pilgrims were thronging from far and near to take part in the revelry. The tradesmen of the city were wont to reap a rich harvest at these times, especially the sculptors and silversmiths, who made little statues and shrines of Diana. These were largely bought by the citizens to carry home with them, or to present to the goddess in her temple.

Now it happened in this particular year that customers were fewer than usual. Demetrius, one of the leading silversmiths of the

city, had watched the growth of Christianity with unfriendly eyes. The slackness of trade was all owing to these teachers of a new religion, he declared, and to their preaching against the worship of the gods.

Gathering together his fellow-tradesmen, he told them that not only would they themselves be ruined by Paul and his companions, but that the great goddess Diana, the glory of their city, was in danger of being dishonoured.

His words were greeted with cries of indignation. "Great is Diana!" shouted the tradesmen, rushing into the street, where they were joined by all the idlers and vagabonds of Ephesus.

The screaming mob swept onwards towards the great theatre, carrying with them Gaius and Aristarchus, two of Paul's companions. Half of them did not even know why they were there; but gathering from the shouts of their companions that it had something to do with the worship of Diana, they swelled the hubbub by shouting her name. The Jews, who were anxious to make it clear that they had nothing to do with Paul and his preaching, put forward one of their party to address the

mob, but the people were not in a condition to make distinctions. He was greeted by a fresh outburst, and for two hours without ceasing the frenzied populace shouted together: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

Paul, having heard of the capture of his companions, was for hastening at once to the spot, but he was forcibly detained by the disciples. Those of the rulers who were friendly to the Christians had in the meantime sent messages urging him not to show himself in the city. The town clerk, who doubtless knew the temper of an Ephesian mob, let the people scream till they were tired. When for sheer exhaustion they were forced to stop, he addressed them quietly.

Who had ever doubted the greatness of their goddess? he asked them. If Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen had anything against any man, the courts of justice were open; let them accuse him there. In the meantime they were likely to get into serious trouble with Rome on account of "this day's uproar."

Sobered by these words, the citizens dispersed to their homes, and peace was apparently restored.

But the fire was only smouldering and might break out again at any moment. The Jews who, much to their disgust, were included by the pagans in their ill-feeling against the Christians, were ready to seize any occasion to vent their spite on Paul. The only way to prevent a persecution of the disciples was for the Apostle to disappear until the storm had blown over.

His soul was heavy with sorrow, for messengers had arrived who brought him sad news of his dear Corinthian community. There were quarrels and divisions amongst them; some had slipped back into the evil habits of their pagan lives, others were treating the sacred mysteries of the Faith with irreverence. Having poured out his heart to them in a burning letter in which he urged them to return to their first fervour, he sent Timothy before him to prepare the way for his own coming, which could not be at once, for he purposed to visit the Churches of Macedonia on the way. It only remained to take a sorrowful farewell of the disciples at Ephesus, after which he set out for Troas, where he expected to meet with Titus. Here he found

work to be done for Christ, and remained awhile to preach the Faith. Titus was not there; the clouds closed in about his spirit, and bodily sickness weighed upon the flesh.

Where was Titus? Well Paul knew that to all his fellow-workers, busy in God's service, the martyr's death might come at any moment. "In stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labours, in watchings, in fastings"—this was the life of those who laboured for the Gospel of Christ. Who knew it better than he?

How was it with the Church in Corinth? Had his letter done its work? Had they received Timothy in charity and in faith? These were the thoughts that harassed him, but could not hinder that intrepid spirit in his work. He was following a crucified Master. "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

In Macedonia, whither he hastened as soon as he could leave the new disciples at Troas, he was met by Luke and Timothy, accompanied by Erastus, the treasurer, one of the most eminent of his Corinthian converts. There also for the faithful disciple of the Cross the Cross was waiting. "Our flesh had no

rest," he wrote to the Corinthians in his second letter; "we were troubled on every side." His old enemies, the Jews, were as active as ever; the pagans were persecuting the Christian communities. Most of all, those "false brethren" who had disappeared so suddenly on his appearance in Galatia, had found their way to Macedonia, and were at their old mischievous work again. "Be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses," they argued, "otherwise you cannot be our equals. We come from Jerusalem—we know."

One drop of comfort came to sweeten the bitter cup. His letter had touched the Corinthians to the heart; they were ready to do all that he asked. At once he dictated a second letter to Timothy praising them for their loyalty, and bidding them "persevere in the Faith." "My lips open and my heart swells with the love I bear you . . . this is my joy, that you give me grounds for hoping all things from you," he wrote in the gladness of his heart. A few months later he was to be with them himself, and the God of love and of peace was to unite them all once more in a bond that could never be broken.

CHAPTER IX

"THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS"

FROM Corinth Paul had arranged to sail to Jerusalem, carrying with him the contributions that he had caused to be collected for the Mother Church in all the Christian communities which he had founded. By obeying thus the injunctions of the Apostles to "be mindful of the Church in Jerusalem," he hoped that a brotherly union might be established between his new converts and the Christians of Judea.

But the Jews of Corinth had not forgotten their grudge against the Apostle. Gallio was still Governor; there was no hope from that quarter. They resolved to manage matters for themselves. They had plenty of money, and they knew from experience that the consciences of pagans were not over-delicate. Paul was about to set sail. What could be easier than to bribe the captain of the ship in

which he took passage to see to it that he did not land? Dead men tell no tales, and the sea keeps her secrets well. Fortunately Paul was warned in time. Giving up all thought of the sea passage, he determined to take the land route through Macedonia.

The little band of disciples who had been chosen to accompany him to Jerusalem were sent on to await his arrival in Troas, while Paul, accompanied by Luke, went northwards through Beroea and Thessalonica to Philippi. From thence they took ship and came to Troas, where they remained for seven days, to the joy of the little Church founded there by Paul after his hasty flight from Ephesus.

It was the night before his departure, and the brethren were gathered together in an upper chamber for the breaking of the Eucharistic Bread. In one of the windows, open to the cool night air, sat a young disciple named Eutychus. There were many last injunctions to be given at this farewell meeting, many dangers against which the little community must be warned, many exhortations to stand fast in the faith of Christ. The room was crowded; the air, heated by many lamps, grew

warm and close. A sudden outcry interrupted the discourse. Eutychus, overcome by sleep, had fallen from the window into the court below—he was dead. Hastening to the spot, Paul stretched himself upon the lifeless form and prayed. “Be not afraid,” he said, “his soul is in him.” Rising, he returned to the upper chamber, while the disciples “brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.”

The Bread of Life was broken to the faithful and the last instructions given. The sun was rising over the sea when Paul bade farewell to his little flock, and set off alone on his way to Assos, where he was to meet his companions. Down the coast they sailed, past the islands of Lesbos and Chios, till they came to Miletus. Paul, in haste to reach his journey’s end, had determined not to land at Ephesus; but now, finding that it was the intention of the captain to remain for a few days at Miletus, he sent word to the Ephesian Elders to meet him there.

Reminding them at what cost and amidst what dangers he had preached to them the Gospel of Christ, he told them that the Spirit

was calling him to Jerusalem. God had made known to him, he said, that suffering and afflictions awaited him there, but such things held no fear for him if so be it he might do his Master's work. And now he knew that they, the beloved disciples to whom he had preached the Kingdom, should see his face no more. Let them therefore watch and take heed of the dangers which beset the Church of Christ; let them guard the flock committed to their care.

Commending them with words of love and tenderness to the God whom they served, he knelt and prayed for the last time in their midst. Their grief broke out in tears and lamentations. Falling on the neck of Paul, they kissed him, "grieving most of all for the word that he had said that they should see his face no more." "We tore ourselves away from them," says St. Luke. The last thing that met their eyes as they sailed away from Miletus was the sorrowful little group on the seashore straining their eyes in one long last look at the beloved face which was vanishing for ever from their sight.

In Phenice the travellers found a ship that

was crossing direct to Syria, in which they took passage. Landing at Tyre, where the vessel was to discharge her cargo, they visited the Christians in the city. The presentiment of coming evil had made itself felt there also, but Paul was deaf to their entreaties to give up the journey to Jerusalem.

At Cesarea they left the ship—for their intention was to continue the journey by land—and spent some days in the house of Philip the Deacon, the friend and companion of St. Stephen. Hearing of their arrival, Agabus the Prophet, who long years ago had foretold the coming of the famine, came down from the mountains of Judea. Entering the assembly of the brethren, he took Paul's girdle, and with it bound his own hands and feet.

"So," said he, "shall the man who owns this girdle be bound by the Jews in Jerusalem, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles."

This solemn repetition of a warning so often heard before made a deep impression on the disciples. Crowding round St. Paul, they besought him not to leave them. Of what use was it, they asked, to go open-eyed into the danger ?

"What are you doing," he cried, "weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

"The will of the Lord be done," they answered in sorrow. They might break his heart, but they could not move that steadfast will. It was of no use to fight against God. One thing at least they could do to help him. Mnason, the Cyprian, an old disciple, had a house in Jerusalem. He, with a few of the brethren, would go with them, that they might have at least a safe lodging during their stay. Amidst sad forebodings Paul took leave of his friends in Cesarea, and the little party set out on foot.

"The brethren received us gladly," says St. Luke. Peter was absent, probably in Rome, and Mark and Silas were with him. James alone of the Twelve seems to have been in Jerusalem.

The Elders having met together, Paul told them in detail the results of his ministry among the Gentiles. The Pastors of the Church rejoiced openly at the good news; to them, God's Hand was manifest in the work

that had been done, and yet their hearts were troubled. They knew too well that many of the Jewish converts in Jerusalem looked with envious and unfriendly eyes at Paul's proceedings. Even the little band of disciples who surrounded him were mostly converted Gentiles, and would be a cause of offence to these men.

It was St. James himself who suggested a plan by which he hoped to disarm these hostile critics. Let Paul do something to prove that he did not, as his enemies asserted, despise the Law. Several of the poorer brethren, having taken the Nazarites' vow, were unable to pay for the sacrifices which were necessary in order that they might fulfil its obligations. Let Paul bestow on them the necessary means, and so perform a charitable and pious action that was looked upon by every Jew as praiseworthy.

Paul was ready to do anything in reason to promote peace ; to be " all things to all men, that he might gain souls to Christ " ; he agreed at once to the proposal. Losing no time, he went the next day to the Temple with the four Christians, and having purified himself, made

all necessary arrangements with the priests. There he remained for seven days, taking part in the prayers and sacrifices of his companions.

Now it happened at this very time that there were in Jerusalem certain Asiatic Jews, from those very synagogues whose persecutions had so embittered Paul's stay at Ephesus. They had met him soon after his arrival in company with Trophimus, one of his Ephesian converts, and had passed him with a scowl of hatred. Catching sight of him at prayer in the court of the Israelites, which it was death for a Gentile to enter, they jumped to the conclusion that Trophimus was there also. This Paul was capable of any insult to the Law; he had, of course, taken his Gentile convert with him into the Holy Place—so at all events they chose to assume.

Rushing into the outer court, they raised an outcry that the Temple was being profaned by "this man who despises the Law." In a few moments the place was crowded with angry Jews, who, falling upon Paul and beating him furiously, dragged him out of the sacred enclosure. It would have been all over with the Apostle had not Claudius Lysias,

the Roman tribune who was in command of the fortress of Antonia, hearing the tumult, hastened to bring a band of soldiers to the rescue.

Having secured Paul, the tribune asked who he was and what he had done. Some shouted one thing, some another.

“ Kill him ! kill him !” they yelled, pressing threateningly on the soldiers as they began to move towards the fortress, carrying Paul with them. When they had reached the foot of the staircase which led into the castle, Paul bent towards the tribune who was marching at his side.

“ May I speak to you ?” he asked in Greek.

Lysias was greatly astonished, for he had concluded that his prisoner was an Egyptian adventurer who had lately caused a riot in the city.

“ Who are you, then ?” he asked.

“ I am a Jew from Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city,” replied Paul. “ I beg you to let me speak to the people.”

The tribune assenting, he turned and faced his enemies, for he was now in safety above the heads of the raging crowd.

"Brethren and Fathers," he said, for he had caught sight of some of the members of the Sanhedrin amongst the mob, "listen, I beseech you, to what I have to say." He had been, he assured them, as great a zealot for the Law as any of them; if he had changed his opinion, it was through a revelation from God. Recounting his early life, his conversion at Damascus, and the events which followed, he came at last to his mission to the Gentiles.

At this word the storm broke out again more furiously than ever. The mob below went mad. They tore their garments, and threw dust into the air, shaking their fists and grinding their teeth at their enemy.

"Away with him," they cried, "he is not fit to live!"

The tribune hurried Paul into the fortress, and having shut the door bade the soldiers scourge him.

"Is it lawful to scourge a Roman citizen?" asked Paul quietly of the centurion who was binding him to the stake.

The man's hands fell; he hurried to the tribune, and warned him to be careful. Lysias was utterly at a loss; he questioned the

prisoner, and found his statement to be true. What was to be done ?

The only way to get to the bottom of this affair, he at last concluded, was to bring his captive before the Sanhedrin. He would guard him well, however, for he had had experience of the temper of the Jews.

The Council therefore assembled, and Paul was brought in. It was easy to see what courtesy and justice awaited him here. "Strike him on the mouth!" cried Ananias, the High Priest, as soon as he opened his lips.

A quarrel soon broke out between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Some were against him, some in his favour. The discussion grew so furious that Lysias, fearing lest Paul should be torn to pieces, ordered the soldiers to carry him back again to the fortress.

The shades of night closed in on the city over which Christ had wept. Paul lay on his prison bed, heartsick and weary. Suddenly the darkness grew luminous, and his Lord stood beside him. "Be of good courage," He said, "as thou hast borne witness of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou also do in Rome."

Before the day had dawned forty of the

Jews, meeting together, had bound themselves by a fearful oath neither to eat nor to drink until they had killed Paul. A scheme by which they hoped to get the prisoner into their hands came to the ears of Paul's nephew who was in Jerusalem.

Going straight to the castle, the young man asked to see Paul, who had him taken to the tribune. The plot was revealed to Lysias, who determined to get his prisoner away as quickly and as quietly as possible. Felix, the Governor of Judea, was at Cesarea; he might be able to settle this troublesome matter. Having written him a letter explaining what had happened, he sent Paul secretly away in the dead of night, guarded by a large body of soldiers.

CHAPTER X

"AN AMBASSADOR IN BONDS"

The safety of his prisoner secured, the tribune Lysias informed the Jews that the case had been transferred to the Governor at Cesarea, to whom they had better go if they wished to give evidence. The High Priest set off at once with his friends, but as they could not speak Greek they engaged a lawyer named Tertullus to plead their cause before Felix.

The court having assembled, Tertullus began his speech with a few compliments adroitly addressed to the Governor. Not only was Paul a pestilent fellow, he argued, a raiser of seditions and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; he had even made an attempt to profane the Temple. If the tribune Lysias had only allowed them to manage their own affairs, he hinted delicately, all this turmoil might have been avoided, for the Jews were obviously the right people to deal with such a case. Since, however, he had chosen

to use violence, a riot had resulted for which they were not in the least to blame. The Jews would bear witness to his words that these things were true. A chorus of assent greeted the close of his speech, when Paul, at a sign from Felix, began his defence.

It was but twelve days, he said, since he had arrived in Jerusalem, whither he had come on an errand of charity. During this time he had neither preached in public nor disputed, but had remained quietly in the Temple at prayer. Concerning the accusation of heresy, it was true that he was of the sect that they denounced, notwithstanding which, he firmly believed all that was written in the Law and the Prophets, and looked for the resurrection of the dead, which the Jews themselves acknowledged. The Sanhedrin had been able to prove nothing against him when Lysias had brought him before them. The men who had laid hands on him in the Temple were certain Jews from Asia. Since it was they who had brought the accusation against him, why were they not there?

Felix was in a difficulty. He would adjourn the case, he said, until the tribune Lysias

should be present. Unwilling to offend the Jews by setting Paul at liberty, yet fearful of the risk of passing an unjust judgment, he kept Paul for two years in prison.

The soldiers received orders to treat him kindly, and to allow his friends to visit him, for Felix, who was not above taking bribes, hoped that the prisoner might persuade some of his well-to-do converts to pay handsomely for his release. Timothy and Luke hastened to Cesarea with other faithful friends of the Apostle; the Christians flocked to visit him. He could continue his apostolate even thus—a touching and pathetic figure, "an ambassador in a chain."

But Felix's career of iniquity came abruptly to an end. He was called suddenly to Rome in disgrace, and Portius Festus, an honest and upright man, was appointed in his stead.

Anxious to know something of the people over whom he was called to rule, the new Governor went up to Jerusalem. There he was assailed by the Jews, who demanded that Paul should be sent to them for trial. They had resolved, if their request were granted, to waylay and murder him on the road; but

Festus refused to give up his prisoner. Let them bring their complaints to Cesarea, he said, and he would give a fair judgment according to the Roman law.

This, however, was more difficult than he had imagined. The Jews repeated the old charges, and Paul met them with the same quiet denial. Festus was altogether at a loss. He was anxious, if it could be done without injustice, to conciliate the Jews.

Was Paul willing, he asked, to go to Jerusalem to be judged by the Sanhedrin in his presence?

The Apostle well knew the uselessness of such a proceeding. "I stand at Cæsar's tribunal," he said, "to Cæsar I appeal." Nothing remained for Festus but to send his prisoner to Rome to be tried before the Emperor's court. But it was his duty to send an account of the case against him, and Festus was thoroughly puzzled as to what he should write. A few days later King Herod Agrippa came to Cesarea with his sister Berenice to pay his respects to the new Governor. He was a Jew, and Festus resolved to consult him on the matter.

Here was a man, he said, who appeared to him entirely innocent, but against whom the Jews seemed bitterly prejudiced on account of some question of religion. One Jesus, whom they declared to be dead, Paul affirmed was alive. Herod's interest was roused. He would like to see this man, he said, and hear what he had to say.

The next day a brilliant assembly was held in the Governor's Hall of Audience, at which Herod Agrippa and his sister, with all their Court, were present. Paul was led in, and Festus, having briefly stated the facts to Agrippa, invited the prisoner to speak.

It was the wonderful story of his life that Paul told as he stood before them in chains, worn with the labours and hardships he had borne for Christ. 'His sole crime, he said, was his belief in the resurrection of the dead. Did it seem so strange a thing to Herod, himself a Jew ? As to the charge of preaching Jesus of Nazareth, it was in obedience to the Divine revelation at Damascus that he had done so. Because of this the Jews had sought to kill him, yet he had preached only what Moses and the Prophets had foretold—that the

Christ must suffer and rise again, to be the Light of the chosen People and of the Gentiles.

To Festus, Paul's impassioned words seemed like the raving of one demented.

"Much learning has made you mad, Paul," he said; "you are beside yourself."

"I am not mad, most excellent Festus," replied Paul gently, "I speak sober words and true." Then, turning to Herod, who had seemed impressed by what he had said:

"Do you believe the Prophets, King Agrippa?" he asked him. "I know that you believe them."

Paul's words had astonished Herod; he had felt himself moved against his will by that burning tide of eloquence. The question brought him suddenly to himself.

"A little more and you would persuade *me* to be a Christian," he answered, half laughing.

Paul's eyes swept the circle of faces before him. With a sudden passionate gesture he raised his fettered hands to Heaven.

"I would to God," he cried, "that you and all who are here with you to-day were altogether such as I am"—the sound of the chains reminded him suddenly of his con-

dition—"except these bonds," he added softly, and the soldiers led him from the hall.

"This man has done nothing worthy of prison or of death," was the general verdict; "he might have been set free if he had not appealed to Cæsar."

It was too late. He had appealed to Rome, and to Rome he must go. He was therefore confided to the care of a centurion called Julius, who was about to embark with a convoy of prisoners for Italy. Luke and Aristarchus, a faithful disciple of Thessalonica, were allowed to go with him, for Julius had received orders to treat Paul with kindness and courtesy.

The ship in which they sailed from Myra was a grain transport on its way from Alexandria to Naples. The wind was against them and they pushed on with difficulty to a small bay called Fair Havens, on the southern coast of Crete. It was not a good harbour to winter in, but the dangerous season had already begun, and a question arose as to whether it would not be wiser to remain there rather than run the risk of seeking a better.

Paul was strongly in favour of the former

course. He warned them that they would risk both the cargo and the lives of the passengers if they continued the journey. Julius, however, was more ready to agree with the captain and the pilot, who were anxious to reach Phenice.

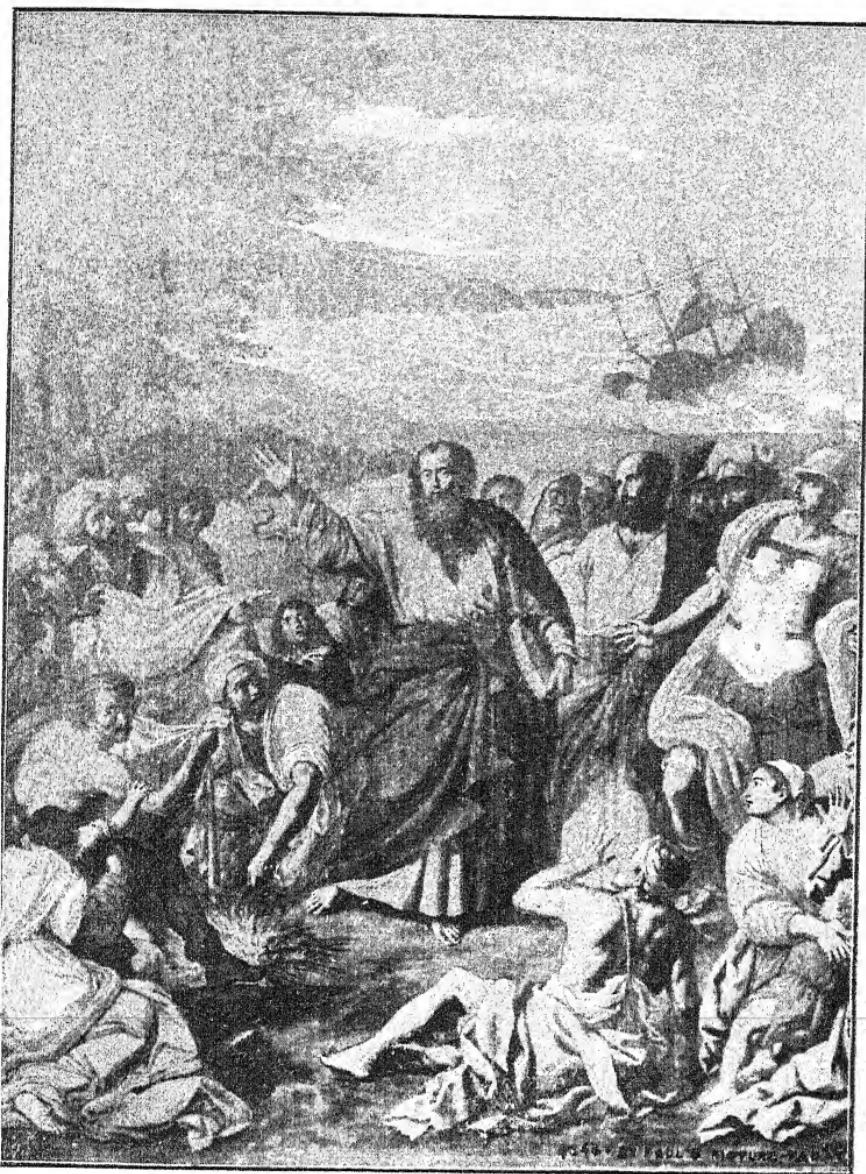
Taking advantage of what looked like the promise of calm weather, they put out to sea, and were sailing along the coast of the island when a sudden hurricane swept down on them through the clefts of the Cretan Mountains. There was nothing to be done but to let the ship drive with the wind, and to hope against hope that she might be able to stand the terrible strain. Beaten and tempest-tossed, fearing at one moment to fall into the quick-sands and at another to be hurled upon the rocks, the terrified crew lightened the ship by casting overboard the greater part of the cargo.

The next day all that could be spared of the ship's tackle was sacrificed; but still the storm continued, seeming rather to increase in fury than to show signs of clearing. A thick darkness enveloped the vessel, while the sailors, losing courage, gave up all hope and

safety, proceeded, under pretence of being busy about the anchors, to lower the boat. But Paul's watchful eyes were upon them; he warned Julius, who gave orders to the soldiers to cut the ropes, and the boat fell into the sea.

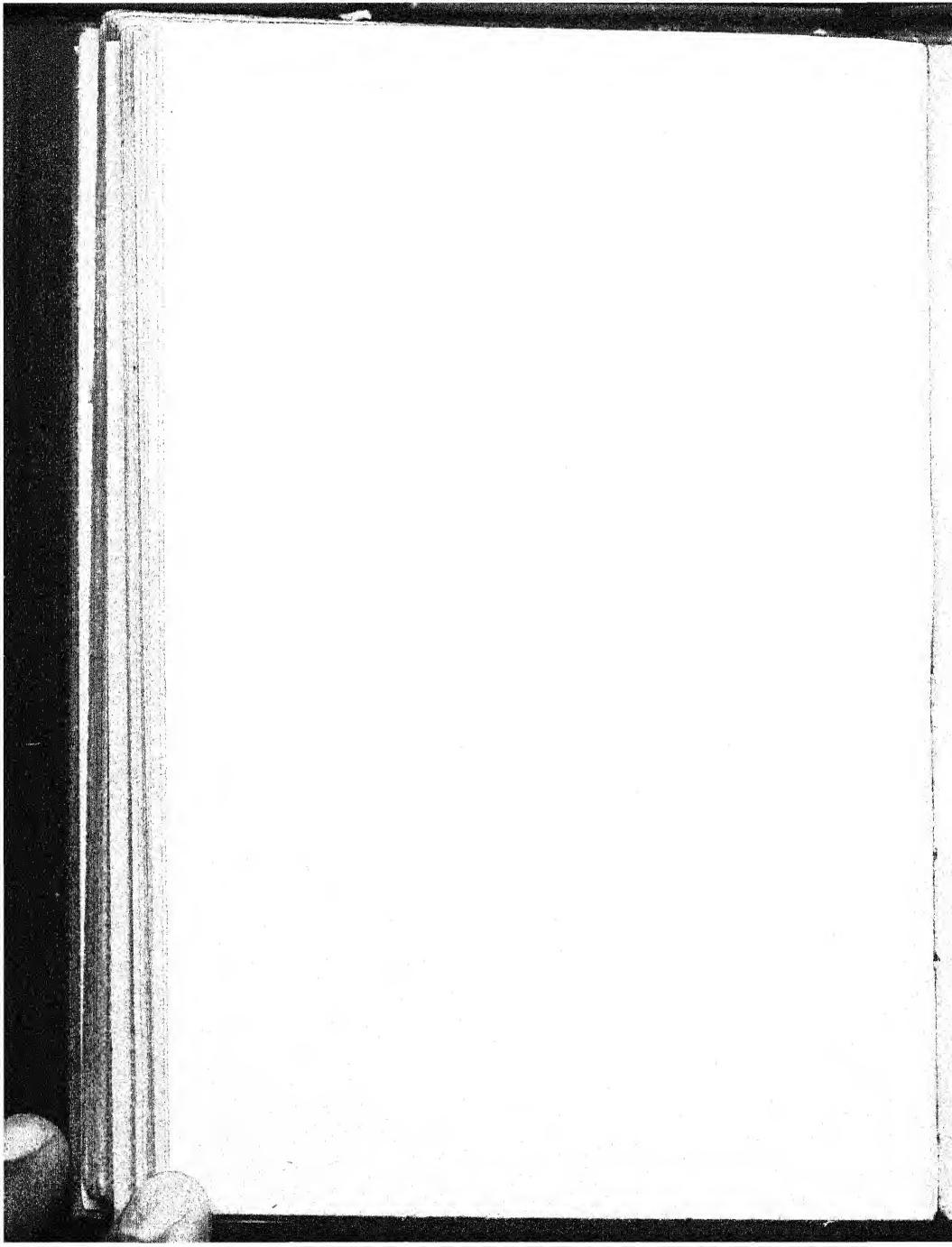
The terrified and fasting passengers were in no condition to battle for their lives. Taking bread in his hands Paul gave thanks to God, broke it, and partook of it before them, inducing them to follow his example, for none of them he said would be drowned. Strengthened by their repast, they proceeded to cast overboard all that remained of the cargo of grain, and by this time it was already day.

It was an unknown coast that the first streaks of dawn revealed to them. They lay directly opposite a small creek or bay into which they resolved, if possible, to run the ship. Cutting the cables, they hoisted her sail to the wind, and made for the opening. But midway between them and the shore was a shoal or reef on which the ship ran aground. The fore part of the vessel stuck fast while the hinder part was rapidly being beaten to pieces by the waves. Swimming was now the only



THE SHIPWRECK OFF THE COAST OF MALTA.

From a picture in the Cathedral Church of Rabato-Notabile at Malta.



chance of safety, but it was also a chance of escape for the prisoners. The soldiers would have put them all to death as the safest and shortest way; but Julius, anxious to save Paul, intervened. Let those who could swim, he said, leave the ship at once, that reaching land, they might do what they could to help the others.

The rest, seizing boats and planks and anything they could find, cast themselves overboard, and all reached the shore in safety.

The inhabitants of the island, who had hastened to the spot, treated the shipwrecked crew with great kindness. It was the Island of Melita, or Malta, they said, as they made a fire to dry the shivering strangers. Paul, who was working with them, had just thrown a bundle of sticks into the flames when a viper, roused by the heat, fastened on him with its poisonous fangs. The islanders, seeing the venomous creature hanging from his hand, concluded that the vengeance of Heaven was pursuing him. "He is a murderer," they whispered amongst themselves, "who has only escaped the dangers of the sea to perish on land."

Paul, who had shaken off the serpent into the fire, seemed alone unconcerned at the occurrence. The people, expecting every moment to see him drop down dead, were astonished beyond words as time went by and no evil effects followed. Opinions suddenly changed; this man must be a god, they said, death had no power to harm him.

Subsequent events only increased their veneration for the stranger. The father of Publius, the Governor of Melita, who had received the travellers into his house, was cured by Paul of a dangerous illness. The news spread fast; all that were sick in the island hastened to the Apostle and were healed; souls as well as bodies drew new life from his presence. The islanders could not do enough to honour the guest that God had sent them, and three months later, when, the dangers of the winter being over, a ship from Alexandria cast anchor in the harbour of Malta, it was a sorrowful company that escorted Paul and his companions to the sea-shore, and bade them a sad farewell.

Landing at Puteoli, the centurion Julius, having remained a few days at Naples, that

Paul might visit the brethren, set out with his prisoners and his troop to Rome. The Christian community had heard of the Apostle's arrival, and came a long way out to meet him. Cheered and encouraged by their loving reception, he entered the city, where, seven years later, he was to meet a martyr's death.

CHAPTER XI

“THE CITY THAT HATH FOUNDATIONS”

THE Roman authorities treated Paul with indulgence, for the report of Festus had been strongly in his favour, and the centurion Julius had nothing but good to say of his prisoner. He was allowed to live in a private lodging of his own, where everyone who wished might come to him. This was all that the Apostle desired, for to a certain extent it made it possible for him to continue his ministry. That he was a prisoner he could never for a moment forget, for a soldier of the Praetorian Guard, whose wrist was fastened by a light chain to his own, was responsible for his safety, and was always at his side. Never for one moment could he be alone; but what to most people would have been an intolerable burden was to him but another chance of winning a soul to Christ. The keepers succeeded each other at intervals. All but the

most brutal of these men must have felt Paul's influence drawing them to higher and nobler things. Some in their turn probably became apostles, and spread the faith of Christ amongst their fellow-soldiers, for the number of Christians in Rome increased greatly during the time of Paul's imprisonment.

The Apostle's first thought was as usual for those of his own nation; he sent messages to the chief men amongst the Jews, begging them to come to him. It was hard indeed to discourage this great-hearted servant of Christ. From the Jews he had received on his own evidence five cruel scourgings. Since the moment when he had fled from Damascus to escape their vengeance, they had plotted to murder him in nearly every city where he had preached the Faith. His imprisonment at Cesarea and in Rome was their doing. Yet now when they came to him in answer to his message, he could say to them in all sincerity that "he had nothing of which to accuse his nation."

Disappointment awaited him here as elsewhere. The greater number refused to believe the Gospel. He could forgive and forget

their treatment of himself, but not their treatment of his Master.

"Well did Isaías prophesy of you," he cried, "with the ear you shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive. . . . Know therefore that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it."

There was already a large Christian community in Rome, amongst whose members were many old friends of earlier days. Scattered abroad through the cities of Greece and Macedonia by the edict of Claudius, they had now returned, for Claudius was dead, and a monster called Nero sat on the imperial throne. There were Christians even in the household of the Emperor—for his wild-beast nature had not as yet fully revealed itself—Christians amongst the noblest families in the city as well as amongst the poorest. Mark was in Rome, and Paul could now speak of him as a true and faithful friend. "Bring Mark with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry," he was to write in later years to Timothy.

Epaphroditus, a faithful disciple of Philippi,

had arrived in Rome with offerings from the Philippians. Lydia and her friends had heard of his imprisonment, and were ready to do all that they could to prove their affection and sympathy. Epaphroditus had fallen ill, and had been "sick nigh unto death" since his arrival. Paul hastened to send by the hands of Timothy a letter full of love and gratitude to the Christians at Philippi, thanking them for their kind thought of him. Their beloved Epaphroditus God had cured, he told them, "lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

The Ephesians had also heard of Paul's imprisonment, and were overwhelmed by the news. The Apostle despatched Tychicus to Ephesus with a letter of comfort. Paul was the "prisoner of Jesus Christ," he reminded them, praying them not "to faint at my tribulation for you, which is your glory."

Luke, the "most dear physician," was with him, and the faithful Aristarchus; Demas also, who was later, under the stress of persecution, to fall away from the faith, and other disciples. The preaching of this "ambassador in a chain" touched the Gentiles to the heart, and strengthened the Christians in their

preaching of the Faith. All who came to Paul found help and sympathy; amongst others a runaway slave called Onesimus, who, having robbed his master Philemon, a Christian of Colossæ, had fled to Rome. This outcast, too, Paul won to Christ, and sent him back to ask pardon of his master. "I beseech you for my son Onesimus," he wrote, "whom I have begotten in my bonds, and whom I send back to you . . . if you look on me as a brother receive him as myself."

The imprisonment dragged on for two long years, at the end of which Paul was set at liberty. He had scarcely left Rome when a terrible persecution broke out against the Christians.

The idea had entered the wicked head of the Emperor to build himself a palace that should be more magnificent than anything the world had seen. He would show them what a Cæsar could do. No expense was spared to carry his plan into execution, but the space at his disposal was not large enough to please his ambitious taste; the poorer quarters, chiefly inhabited by Jews and Christians, were in his way.

Suddenly one July day a terrible fire broke out in the crowded part of the city that lay nearest to the new palace. Street after street was consumed until the whole valley was like a blazing furnace. Scarcely had it died down when the flames burst forth again—rumour whispered that the men sent by Nero to fight against the fire helped rather than hindered its spreading. It was said that the Emperor had been seen on the roof of his palace singing of the fall of Troy, and exulting in the sight of the blazing city. He was already hated for his crimes; Rome had grown weary of the monster's tyranny. The Emperor realized that he had gone too far; his popularity was in danger. Someone must be found to bear the blame. An evil counsellor suggested the Christians; they were an unpopular sect, disliked and despised by the Romans. Nero caught eagerly at the idea.

The story was at once circulated that the Christians had set fire to the city; they were enemies of the State and of the people. This was the more readily believed as the fire had broken out in their quarter, and men, women, and children were seized and cast into prison.

The evil mind of Nero then conceived a new idea. In putting the Christians to a fearful death he might at the same time insure his own popularity by providing an exciting entertainment for his subjects. The Romans loved the cruel sights of the arena, the combats with wild beasts, the fights of the gladiators; he would give them the chance of indulging their taste to the utmost.

A great festival was announced to take place in the circus that the Emperor had built for himself in the gardens that lay at the foot of the Vatican hill, and the citizens of Rome were invited to attend. Posts had been set up at regular intervals to which the Christians had been bound; the entertainment was now to begin. Panthers, lions, and other wild beasts were let loose in the arena, and, springing upon the martyrs, tore them limb from limb. A fresh batch of Christians were then brought out, wrapped in the skins of wild beasts. These were hunted to death by ferocious dogs which had been made more savage by hunger.

But the triumph of cruelty was reserved for the evening.

Into the ground huge stakes had been driven, on which the Christians, wrapped in tunics soaked in pitch and sulphur, were impaled and set on fire. In the light of these fearful torches a chariot race was held, in which the Emperor himself took part. He was in the highest spirits; surely his lost popularity would now be regained after such a day as he had given to the people. But he had gone too far—even for the Romans. Murmurs of horror and pity broke out amongst the crowd. The chariot-race was scarcely applauded; the citizens returned home ill-content. Nero's plan had failed.

In the dead of the night men and women crept silently into the deserted gardens to gather up the relics of their dead, those first-fruits of the martyrs who had given their lives for Christ. They were reverently buried in a secret place, and as the day dawned the disciples crept back again to their hiding-places.

The persecution continued to rage. Edicts were issued against the Christians all over the Roman Empire. Those who had not courage to face death fled into the neighbouring countries.

"Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you," says St. Peter in his epistle to the Churches of Asia, written at Rome about this time. "If you partake of the sufferings of Christ rejoice. . . . If you be reproached for Christ you shall be blessed."

So were the Christians strengthened for the coming storm that they might "glorify God in this name."

* * * *

The years had gone by and Paul was in Rome, again a prisoner. The brethren no longer thronged about him, for it was death for them to be recognized. The faithful Onesiphorus who had followed him to Rome had to make a long search before he discovered Paul's prison. "I am even now ready to be sacrificed," he wrote to Timothy in Ephesus, "and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith."

St. Peter had also been taken. According to tradition the two Apostles shared the same prison, and were destined to suffer martyrdom at the same time, St. Peter being crucified

within the city, and St. Paul beheaded without the walls. "When thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not go," the Master had said to Peter, signifying, adds the Evangelist, "by what death he should glorify God."

To Peter also it had been revealed that the end was near. "I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance," he writes in his second epistle to the Churches shortly before his death, "being assured that the laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand, according as Our Lord Jesus Christ has signified to me. To Him be glory both now and to the day of eternity."

That St. Paul was twice brought up for trial we know from the letter written from his prison in Rome to Timothy at Ephesus. On the first occasion he had been "delivered out of the mouth of the lion," but he knew that the respite was short, and the second trial could have but one ending. There was in Rome neither justice nor mercy for a Christian.

"Make haste to come to me quickly," he writes, "only Luke is with me. . . . The

cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee and the books, especially the parchments. . . . Make haste to come before winter. Eubulus and Pudens and Linus and Claudius and all the brethren salute thee. The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit."

* * * *

They led him out along the Ostian way to a spot far from the crowded city. A little band of soldiers surrounded him, three of whom were to be won to Christ by the death of the martyr. His eyes looked out over the sunlit campagna to the far horizon and the blue Italian sky, but they saw none of these things. It was a fairer vision that strengthened him for the last fight, and beckoned him to a glorious eternity.

"For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen but the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

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